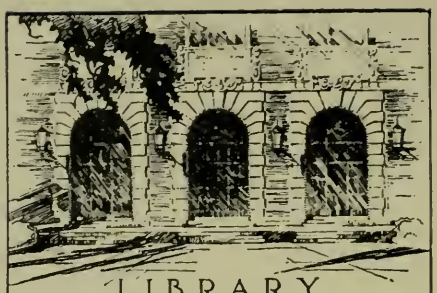

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THE

WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

A NOVEL.

BY

THE AUTHORESS OF THE

DIARY OF A DÉSENNUYÉE.

erine Grace Frances (Moody) Gore

"O matter and impertinency mix'd!"

SHAKSPEARE.

THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER.

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English

THE

WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

Love, faithful love, recalls thee to my mind.
  Oh! how could I forget thee? Through what power?
  Even for the least division of an hour
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss?

WORDSWORTH.

THE funeral of the Right Honourable the Earl of Shropshire was of course so calculated by the experienced taste of Messrs. Sable

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and Sconce, the most fashionable undertakers of the day, as to abstract the greatest possible number of pounds from the pockets of the heir, and reflect the greatest possible quantity of honour and waxlight upon the memory of the deceased. No restraint having been imposed upon their preparations by the interference of surviving friends, they had shut out every ray of daylight from Bridgnorth Church, by black velvet hangings emblazoned with heraldic escutcheons, grimly illuminated at intervals by waxen torches and silver sconces. The Yeomanry Cavalry commanded by the late earl, attended, with its muffled drums and Dead March in Saul; and so appalling was the solemnity and so stifling the atmosphere, that more than one stout tenant's wife was carried forth swooning into the churchyard, overpowered (as the County Chronicle described it

on the following day) by heartfelt emotions of "grief for the loss of the best of landlords."

But of all the assembled crowd, panting in those disfigured aisles of the house of God into whose temple we are bound to bring our dead with humility and peace, the chief mourner, aloft in his lordly pew, was the only individual on whose feelings the ceremony produced a genuine impression. Long years had elapsed —twenty or more—since, for the first and only time, he knelt to pray in Bridgnorth Church by the side of his mother Lady Caroline Helmsley, at that time the guest of his uncle; and he had not yet forgotten the childish volatility with which his eyes and mind had wandered from the pulpit of the prolix dignitary of the church, towards the lofty family monuments in the chancel, which preached so far more sternly and succinctly to the vanity of human pride!

There stood the majestic effigies of the Earls of Shropshire,—warriors, statesmen, prelates, legists;—below, in almost undistinguishable decay, lay their mouldering remains. And now, a new coffin and a new monument were to be added to the heap; and the next to follow,—even the next,—must be his own!—For *him* the torches must burn and the escutcheoned banners wave, —the muffled bell toll, and the chaunts of the choir arise;—even as at that moment for one who was gone to his dread account of the good things and means of good, which, in his lifetime, he had received from the lavish hand of his Creator!

No wonder that Lord Monthermer directed a wistful eye towards those rigid figures of marble, half seen between the sable draperies overspreading the chancel, and deriving a ghastly whiteness from the streaming light of the tapers

and the contrast of the hangings of black velvet.—He felt depressed, almost to fainting; and scarcely recovered himself till, at the close of the solemn celebration, the mourners emerged from that stifling confinement and unnatural radiance, into the lightsome, laughing, sunlit landscapes of Bridgnorth Park!—Never had the face of day appeared so cheering to the eye of the excited Lord Monthermer!

It was of course inferred by the ecclesiastical, legal and commercial functionaries of the family, that his lordship would preside in state over the dinner which was to complete the solemnities of the day; and great was their surprise to find that his travelling carriage was already in waiting, and to receive his apologies, on the score of eagerness, after nearly half a year's separation from his family, to embrace his children. His excuse was scarcely delivered

with sufficient earnestness to appease the self-love of his guests. To leave his own house full of visiters, on a day of so much importance, struck their gravityships as flighty and unbecoming. Little was known among them of the new lord. They now settled it that he was an oddity; but as eccentricity is an infirmity which places a man considerably in the power of his dependents, they forgave his apparent incivility in favour of a weakness which promised strength to their cause.

Meanwhile, Helmsley Abbey being considerably nearer to the castle than Wroughton Hall, Lord Monthermer had despatched from London to Emma and Aunt Margaret, a request that they would meet him at home with the children; leaving it of course to themselves to announce his arrival to his household. Yet, at the very lodge-gate of the

Abbey, he discerned from the scared looks of the porter that he was neither expected nor prepared for. On reaching home, its aspect was scarcely less mournful than the house of death in Grosvenor Square. The shutters were closed,—the doors barred,—the garden walks green with weeds;—no smoke from the chimneys,—no sound of feet in the hall,—no fire on the hearth. The library into which he was ushered, smelt mouldy as the family vault into which he had that morning descended; and the housekeeper and butler who bustled in to receive him, addressed him with excuses that sounded almost like a reprimand for the march he appeared to have stolen upon his unoffending establishment. They had heard nothing from Wroughton Hall, nothing of the decease of Lord Shropshire;—they were, in short, as far behind the progress of public events, as

Lord Shropshire had been apt to consider his nephew when country-baronetizing at the Abbey.

Thwarted in all his expectations, Lord Monthermer resolved to proceed immediately to Wroughton Hall. But some delay was indispensable,—fresh post-horses being only procurable at six miles' distance; and dreary indeed were the three hours that intervened previous to his departure. It was not the dull mistiness produced by the damp of a deserted house upon the windows, mirrors, bookcases, and ornaments around him; it was not the disorderly look of the lawn with its neglected flower-beds, or the park with its unsightly sheep-pens. It was a sensation for which he had not prepared himself;—the sensation of entering, as it were anew, the presence of Marcella!—

Discarded as she had recently been from his memory, and superseded in his affections, he felt that she was still paramount *there*;—in her own accustomed home—the home that she had embellished—the home that she had blessed! There, reclining on that very sofa whereon he was now seated, had he a thousand times sworn to her delighted ears fidelity and affection for time and for eternity; sworn, as men (and even husbands) in love will sometimes swear, that no other woman should for a moment come between her and the adoration of his soul!—How—how had he kept his vow?—What was to him *now* the mother of his children?

Those musical instruments mute in their cases, were the same with which, hour after hour, she used to charm his moments of summer leisure. Those windows were the same from whence, with his arm encircling her waist,

they were wont to gaze together upon the fertile landscapes, "the pleasant places," allotted to their enjoyment;—those windows from which, as he now stood gazing with a sinking heart, he beheld only the tower of the church in which she was lying, neglected and forgotten!—A chill came over him as he stood rebuked by the recollection of his recent levities,—his reckless defalcation from the principles they had professed together!—

He rushed out into the open air. Around him were the neglected gardens of an absentee. Weeds had usurped Marcella's favourite spot. The green bank encircling a seat which, in the early spring, formed the limit of her daily walk, was still fragrant with its heavy-headed double violets, and bright hepaticas. But they bloomed half choked by grass and groundsel. There had been none to say "let the spot she loved

be tended as she was wont to tend it when she was here."

For the first time, Monthermer experienced a feeling of loathing towards the abode of his ancestors. He began to hate the Abbey and its associations, each one of which conveyed so severe a rebuke; and to bless his stars that other scenes and other houses awaited him. It was a relief when he drove from the gates; it was a relief to be able to promise himself that he would not speedily return to the desecrated spot.

But even at Wroughton, fondly as he was welcomed by its inmates, Lord Monthermer experienced a feeling of bitterness amid the tears of delight with which, again and again, he pressed his children to his bosom. His letter to Emma had never been received; in the confusion prevalent at such a moment in Lord

Shropshire's establishment, had probably never been taken from the letter-box; and the little family party, aware that he had been sent for by express, were still watching the papers for tidings of his arrival at Dovor, when he was already on his way into Northamptonshire. But to those who loved him so dearly, he could never come too soon; and stationed by a warm and cheerful fire, with aunt Margaret on one side, Emma on the other, and a child upon each knee,—all intently regarding him, all watching his looks with an expression of anxious tenderness in their own,—he might be supposed as much an object of envy as of affection.

Yet even then and there, a conscious pang was rankling in the heart of Lord Monthermer! Reminiscences banished from his soul, were crowding back again,—reminiscences full of pain—full of accusation. The voice of Emma

Wroughton which, even in her lifetime, singularly resembled that of Marcella, after long absence sounded like a voice from the dead. In phrases habitual to her sister, she expressed her sister's sentiments; while little Mary's hazel eyes, as they turned full of fondling tenderness towards her father, were even as her mother's eyes fixed yearning upon his face. Harry, too, from living exclusively with aunt Emma, looked and spoke more like his departed parent than he had ever seemed to do before; and involuntarily Lord Monthermer glanced from the faces around him towards the portrait still hanging in its accustomed place, till he could have shrieked aloud a prayer to be delivered from the haunting of that admonitory resemblance, of those painful associations.

Before the family separated for the night, he was careful to apprize them that urgent business connected with the administration of Lord

Shropshire's affairs, compelled him to return to town early on the morrow. But this announcement only accelerated the trial he was anxious to avoid. Emma immediately requested a few minutes' private conversation with him; the subject of which, as he readily conjectured, was the state of affairs between her brother and Lady Adelaide de Vere. In vain did he struggle to modify the discussion. Emma's frank inquiry was too straightforward to be evaded.

"Is there any hope for us?"—she demanded, "or must I make up my mind to witness the disgrace and misery of my poor Gerald?"

"Neither disgrace nor misery, I trust,"—replied Lord Monthermer, in a tone of assumed cheerfulness. "I know no man who enjoys happier prospects."

"But you do not answer me!"—cried Emma. "Is he or is he *not* to marry Lord Colebrooke's daughter?"

"Had you inquired of me a month ago,"—replied her brother-in-law,—"I should not have hesitated to answer 'he *is*.' I knew that it was his desire,—I fancied that it was his destiny. Circumstances have induced me to alter my opinion. I have reason to suppose that Lady Adelaide's sentiments are less favourable to Gerald's views than he once induced me to believe."

"Thank God!" interrupted Emma Wroughton.—"Whether proceeding from coldness or fickleness, heaven keep her to her opposition. There would have been an end to all the happiness of the family, had that woman consented to marry my brother."

"You express yourself too vehemently,—you pronounce too harshly!"—cried Lord Monthermer, with a heightened complexion, "Lady Adelaide de Vere is one of the most charming and accomplished women in Europe."

"A divorcée!"—cried Emma.

"A divorcée at her own instance. It is not womanly Emma, to exercise your severity upon one of your own sex, who, having been betrayed into an unhappy marriage, redeems herself from a life of terror and wretchedness by an appeal to the laws of the land."

"Mr. de Ligne assures me," said Emma, mortified by this reproof,—"that Lord Sherburne was more sinned against than sinning; that he was actually driven out of his senses by the cunning with which witnesses were suborned to impute crimes to *him*, of which he had in fact been made the victim."

"Mr. de Ligne has permitted himself to discuss a question with which he can be but very imperfectly acquainted,"—answered Monthermer, in a voice tremulous with anger.—"*I* know from an able and dispassionate witness (Gerald's excellent friend Dr. Moorsom), that in the

affair of her marriage and divorce, Lady Adelaide was altogether blameless.—De Ligne has never associated with Lord Colebrooke's family, nor any of their set. De Ligne has never lived in the world. De Ligne is a *borné*, prejudiced man. It would be far better for him to abstain from talking of persons of whom he knows nothing,—literally nothing."

"He knows in what light Lord Colebrooke's family is regarded in society."

"*Society!*—what *sort* of society?—The circle of squires' and parsons' wives of a country neighbourhood!"—

Emma Wroughton, excited in her turn, could no longer restrain herself from observing—"My opinion of these people has not been wholly formed upon the testimony of our good neighbour Mr. de Ligne; it was from my dear sister that—"

"Enough—enough!"—cried the agitated

Monthermer, unwilling to trust himself to hear further. "Entertain what opinions you think proper; but before you select *me* to become your auditor, it is but just I should inform you that I have no friends I regard more highly than the Colebrookes; that there is not a woman on earth I more truly admire than Lady Adelaide de Vere."

Emma started, but uttered not another syllable. Taking up her candle with one hand, and extending the other as a silent pledge of peace towards her brother-in-law, she quitted the room.

As she bent over the pillows of her little nephew and niece ere she retired to rest, silent tears fell from her eyes in attestation of the shock she had received, and the terrors that were entering into her soul; nor could all Mrs. Knowles's ejaculations in honour of my lord her master, who had presented her with a 50*l.*

note, in acknowledgment of her zealous discharge of her duties to the children during his absence, induce Miss Wroughton to utter a single syllable of applause. She passed a sleepless night;—the most disturbed, the most painful since that succeeding the loss of her irreplaceable friend, the much-loved sister of her youth!

CHAPTER II.

Seest thou not, I say, what a deformed thief this fashion is?—how giddily he turns about all the hot bloods between fourteen and five-and-twenty?

SHAKSPEARE.

COULD the deceased earl of Shropshire have witnessed the inauguration of his noble heir at the Clarendon Hotel, two days after his own in the family-vault, he might have been perhaps reconciled to the necessity of putting up with a successor so mediocre. For already, very little trace of country-baronetism was discernible in Lord Monthermer. Instead of

installing himself domestically in his new mansion, he fled from its lugubrious aspect and associations to a fashionable hotel; smitten with a profound consciousness of the necessity of escaping from himself and home.

As great a relief as it had been to depart from the Abbey, was it now to find himself among new faces and new scenes; and the assiduity with which, an hour after his arrival, his venison steaks, roast pheasant, and Château Margout were set before him by the worshipful hands of the prime minister of the Clarendon, in person, would have revealed to the merest tyro in London life his recent accession to rank and fortune.

Before the conclusion of his solitary dinner, a card was brought in:—"Lord Royston, who was in the house, would be glad of a few minutes' conversation with Lord Monthermer." Now, though Lord Monthermer remembered

having been at Eton and Oxford with the said noble lord, he could not call to mind that Lord Royston had ever afterwards requested a few minutes' conversation with Sir William Helmsley. But it was no moment for punctilio! Royston was the brother of Alexis Bagot,—Alexis Bagot was an *attaché* at Naples. A string of sympathy was touched, and a civil answer despatched.

"Good God!—you are at dinner—I beg ten thousand pardons!"—cried Lord Royston, half entering and as quickly recoiling from the room. "It did not occur to me that any body dined at this early hour."

"I have not yet divested myself of continental habits," said Monthermer, following and drawing back the supercilious dandy. "Pray come in, if you are not afraid of the smell of dinner,"—he continued,—not noticing that the head-waiter was burning essences in an

or-moulu ladle, the scent of which, combined with the vapours of smelts, venison, and Stilton cheese, rendered matters worse than before.

"I dine at the Travellers' at eight with Loxley and the Duke of Wexford," said Lord Royston, taking the seat offered him,—"and was anxious to see you first, to ask a few questions about my brother."

"I left Mr. Bagot about a fortnight since," replied Lord Monthermer, "in excellent health and spirits, having passed a very agreeable winter at the feet of Lady Wycombe."

"Yes, I know—it is not *that*—I heard from Leck about Christmas,—I am aware that he is *well*. What I wanted to inquire of you (as I know you have spent the winter at Naples), was about the possibility of sending over a cursed cabriolet that my brother ordered of Adams before he went out; and concerning which the fellow bores me half a dozen times a

week. How the deuce is the thing ever to be got to Naples?—My head groom proposed sending it at the tail of the waggon!—Capital groom's idea, eh?—However, that don't help either the cab to Naples or Adams to his money. Can you give me either advice or assistance?"

"I should conceive there would be no difficulty in shipping a carriage in the first merchant-vessel sailing from the Thames," replied Lord Monthermer, admiring the easy familiarity of his new old friend.

"Embarking it?—True!—Very good!—I had not thought of *that*.—I shall leave the whole business for Adams to manage. One has quite enough on one's hands without slaving for one's younger brothers,—eh? By the way, I suppose I may offer you my congratulations?"

"Thank you!" replied Monthermer, rather stiffly, fancying his visiter alluded to the recent change in his position and prospects.

"I fancy, though, she's a devilish deal older than him,—eh?"

Lord Monthermer looked almost as surprised as he felt, at this transition.

"Leck writes me word,"—continued Lord Royston, rising and warming himself before the fire,—"that Naples has been dreadful this winter, —not a soul one knows or cares to know; and that he and the Wycombe set would have been regularly bored, but for the amusement of watching the courtship."

Lord Monthermer bit his lips, and was silent.

"However, it must certainly be owned," resumed the garrulous fine gentleman, "that she *is* a devilish fine creature!—What a build,—what action!—I don't know though that I should have suspected her of taking a fancy to vegetation and a country squire!"

"If you allude to Lady Adelaide de Vere and my brother," interrupted Lord Monthermer, "I can assure you that there has been *no* court-

ship between them, nor is there likely to be a marriage."

"The devil there an't!"

"It is fortunate for my friend Bagot and Lady Wycombe that they are able to amuse themselves so well with their own inventions."

"I don't know what you call fortunate!—I shall give Leck a famous blowing up for causing me to spread false reports. I told the story the other day at White's, to every one who would hear it."

"I do not perceive that there is much of a story to tell."

"*I* do though; and a famous good one!—Lady Adelaide de Vere,—*our* Lady Adelaide,—*the* Lady Adelaide,—to fall in love with a Northamptonshire squire!—*Impayable,* upon my soul!—By the way, Monthermer, what do you mean to do about that bay filly of poor Bridgnorth's?"—

"I was not aware that poor Bridgnorth pos-

sessed a bay filly. You forget," continued Lord Monthermer, so far conquering his temper as to manage a smile, "how short a time I have had since my arrival to ——"

"True!" interrupted the reckless Royston. "It has all been deuced sudden,—it must all seem deuced strange to you, eh?—Poor Bridgnorth was a famous fellow, and old Shropshire a devilish gentlemanly person in his way. Only if you *should* make up your mind to part with that filly, I think I can answer for it that Loxley would take her off your hands, on fair terms. Where do you dine to-morrow?"

"*Here,* I imagine," answered Lord Monthermer, thrown off his guard by the free and easy abruptness of his visiter.

"Then dine with *me,*" said Lord Royston.

"Thank you,—I rather fear that—"

"Oh! if you have no engagement, you *must,*"— replied Royston, making a move to

depart; and Monthermer felt that his rash candour had rendered further excuse impossible.

"Loxley, Wexford, and half a dozen capital fellows, will be with me," persisted Lord Royston. "Eight o'clock,—without ceremony;—and you and Loxley can settle about the filly. *Sans adieu!* I am afraid I have interrupted your dinner."

And away went Lord Royston to prepare his noble friends for the rustic they were to meet the following day; a fellow whom he had found dining at the Clarendon at six o'clock, drinking *un*iced Sauterne, and reading a morning paper!—

But it happened that the little party assembled at Lord Royston's dinner-table, comprehended several persons and personages who were far from disposed to look with contempt upon the newly inheriting peer. Lord Loxley, of course, respected in him the owner of Lord

Bridgnorth's racing stud, which was not yet brought to the hammer; while his Grace of Wexford (a gouty duke, whose income amounted to no more than an embarrassed four thousand per annum), felt deferentially disposed towards a fine young man, with an unincumbered fortune of ten times the amount. Then there was the showy Hungarian Count Flaszhaski, who by dint of some cleverness and much impudence, had brought himself and his tailor into fashion, at the expense of other people's money and his own time; and who was enchanted at the prospect of a new lord to dazzle with his *bon-mots*, saddle with his unsound horses, and harness into his cast-off carriages.

But better than all these in the sight of Monthermer, there was the brilliant St. Leger Kerr, of political eminence,—one of those granite piers on which the wooden superstructure of the government bridge is so often raised and

rendered permanent;—by whom, from the moment of their mutual introduction, the new peer was treated with signal deference. For Monthermer, who as a country baronet had passed among the Northamptonshire squires for a liberal conservative, was known to have been living in Italy in the *clique* of Lord Colebrooke, notoriously a liberal Whig; and, as Helmsley had never been in parliament, never pledged himself in public either to a constituency or the house, Mr. Kerr was not without hope that Lord Monthermer might be seduced, either by kindness or in blindness, towards the ministerial side. A man so accustomed to address himself to the passions and frailties of his fellow-creatures, knows pretty well where to hit his man. Instead therefore of trying to dazzle his new friend by the brilliancy of his own eloquence, he gave ear with an air of profound conviction to that of Monthermer; affected intense curi-

osity concerning Neapolitan politics; and after listening to a great deal of twaddle which he had already perused in more perspicuous language in the foreign newspapers, thanked the noble lord for the valuable insight afforded him into the position of affairs and the state of public feeling in Italy.

Accustomed for some months past to find himself an object of secondary interest in society, and to see even his young brother preferred before him, Monthermer was flattered by the distinctions thus gratuitously conferred. The fastidious Count Flaszhaski had taken occasion to congratulate him on being dressed by the immortal Cooke,—a distinction of which he was at present unconscious; the necessity of being provided with mourning immediately on his arrival, having thrown him upon the discretion of Lord Shropshire's valet, he had succeeded to poor Bridgnorth's tailor as uncon-

sciously as to his bay filly. At length, elated by the incense of his adroit adulators and a liberal allowance of sherry and champagne, the new peer lost sight of his regrets and rationality; and was ready to exclaim with the boor in the play,—" Upon my life, I am a lord indeed."

After dinner, cigars and *garus* punch were produced; and after the cigars and a considerable waste of dialogue (in a jargon in which at present poor Monthermer found himself sadly in need of a dragoman), the party proposed to proceed to the Olympic Theatre, where Lord Loxley had a private box; upon which Monthermer, finding St. Leger Kerr take leave of his friends on the plea of proceeding to the house, resolved to take the opportunity to make his escape.

" But you, mine dear lord, was not going to *la Chambre*?"—cried Count Flaszhaski, following him to the door.

"You have not taken your seat, I fancy?"—said Lord Loxley, advancing on the other side, to ask for his cloak.

"No!—but I—I have an engagement," replied Monthermer, still trying to get away.

"Upon my soul, I do believe my dear fellow, you mean to sport decorous!"—cried Royston. "You are afraid of being seen at a playhouse so soon after being seen at a funeral,—eh?—But recollect the old fellow's been gone this month. The business is new to *you* but stale to all the rest of the world!"

Monthermer muttered something, as coherent as *garus* punch would allow, about respect to the memory of his uncle.

"Your *oncle*—of what use, in Heaven's name is an oncle, except as regards de *succession*?"—cried Flaszhaski.

"'*Un oncle est un caissier donné par la nature.*' Do not disrespect poor Shropshire so much as

talk of him now, when he ought to be vorgotten.—*Allons!*"

"There is really not the smallest occasion for scruple," said the duke, gravely. "Loxley's box is a *loge grillée;*—unless you *wish* it, you need not be seen."

Monthermer now felt the not particularly steady arm of his new friend, Lord Royston, enlaced in his own; and it was impossible to decline assisting him to the foot of the stairs. In the hall, he found it equally impossible to avoid stepping into the cab, the gaping jaws of which were open to receive him; and thus, from one glass of wine to another,—from one blockheadism to another,—Lord Monthermer found himself still included in the joyous party. He only rejoiced that his admirer Mr. St. Leger Kerr was already on his way to Westminster. Though he had marvelled during dinner at the facility with which so distin-

guished a man as Kerr took part in the discussions upon cookery and cookery-books, actresses and the liaisons of actresses, he was not desirous of exciting surprise in his turn, as the puppet of a group of numskulls.

Arrived in the little cozy box of Lord Loxley, however, and exposed to the meretricious blaze of the theatre, Lord Monthermer, instead of finding his scruples subside, was at once restored to his better self, and shocked to find himself at such a moment in such a place. It was no longer the deference due to the memory of his uncle, which moved his remorse. It was not even the contrast afforded by the gaudy theatre to the solemn aisles he had recently seen caparisoned with the pomps of death. It was rather to *home* and its associations he felt himself unfaithful. So recently as he had stood in the deserted chamber of Marcella—so recently as he had pressed her surviving chil-

dren to his bosom, he felt that he had no business among the dissolute and vain, following up the course of their licentiousness in the temple of idleness and folly.

Seizing the earliest pretext to escape, he quitted the theatre, and returned home; and after a heavy, but unrefreshing night's rest, woke with a severe headache, and a recollection that Lord Loxley was to propose him the following day at the Travellers'; and the Duke of Wexford accompany him on the morrow's morrow, to take the oaths and his seat, as a legislator for Great Britain and her millions.

CHAPTER III.

La bagatelle, le science,
Les chimères, le rien, tout est bon ; je soutiens
Qu'il faut de *tout* aux entretiens.

La Fontaine.

It was a relief to Lord Monthermer when the final forms and ceremonies of legateeship exacted by Doctors' Commons, were fulfilled; and he had the satisfaction of learning from Messrs. Cognovit, after probate of his uncle's will, that, comprehending the Helmsley estates, he was in the enjoyment of fifty thousand per

annum, and two of the most charming seats in the kingdom.

If ever man had an excuse for elation, it was himself. Yet with the inpouring of this golden tide came an occasional drop of wormwood, to remind him that, amid all his greatness, he was mortal. There was a pompous house-steward of the late lord, for instance, who would not hear of allowing his master's noble successor to be comfortable in his own way. Without tact to perceive that Lord Monthermer, in avoiding Grosvenor Square for the easy freedom of an hotel, wished to prolong till the last moment his enjoyment of the dressing-gown-and-slipper-hood of private life, he chose to wait upon him every morning "for orders."

"What would your lordship wish to have done respecting the establishment?"—inquired the dignified-looking Mr. Gossage, on the day

succeeding the probate of the will. "I hold myself, of course, responsible to your lordship for the menials under my jurisdiction. I have already apprized them, under the instructions of your lordship's solicitors, Messrs. Cognovit, of the munificent bequest of the late earl, of one year's wages to each. Is it your pleasure, my lord, that I should further signify to all or any of them, dismissal from your service?"

"To *none*. I wish the household to remain on its present footing, till I have had time to form plans of my own."

"We concluded, my lord, that in all probability your establishment from Helmsley Abbey would—"

"My establishment at the Abbey is not to be broken up," interrupted Lord Monthermer, waxing somewhat wroth at finding himself thus slily cross-examined. "For the present, you will keep things in their present

state in Grosvenor Square, and send in your accounts to be audited as usual; but, till I settle in town for the season, I shall not take up my residence there."

"Certainly, my lord," said Mr. Gossage, having extracted all he wanted to know. "I perfectly comprehend—I shall attend to your lordship's instructions.—But I think, my lord, I understood you to say that things were to be kept in their present state?"

"I did. Every thing as it is."

"The object therefore of my present intrusion is to acquaint your lordship that, last season, previous to my Lord Bridgnorth's unfortunate yachting expedition, orders had been given under his directions for completely refurnishing the house; new hangings for the drawing-rooms,—new suites of carved ebony furniture,—new carpets,—new every thing—all (as I am informed by Messrs. Maple and Co.,

upholsterers to the late earl) *alla moreyon arge.* Every thing was to be complete by winter. But the unfortunate event in the Baltic put my lord out of heart; and when the time came to commence operations, his lordship's own illness had commenced, and the change was put off from day to day, so that nothing was done. But I am instructed by Messrs. Maple and Co., to acquaint your lordship that every thing is complete and ready to be submitted to your lordship's inspection; and that if permitted to enter without delay, they can undertake to have the house complete and in the highest order, before the close of the Easter holidays."

Lord Monthermer paused a moment for consideration. It appeared as if his uncle and cousin previous to their departure from the world, had studied nothing but the convenience and pleasure of the kinsman they despised! He had experienced, though ashamed to avow

it even to himself, an objection to enter that gloomy, dingy house, connected in his mind with the recollection of distasteful visits of ceremony, and the appalling paraphernalia of death. Newly decorated, and wearing an aspect more consonant with the spirit of the times, he fancied the spell would be broken. Lord Bridgnorth was a man of exquisite taste. A more advantageous clerk-of-the-works could not have been selected. The restoration of his house, moreover, would afford a rational plea for the erratic nature of his present courses.

"Let the upholsterers know that I will call upon them in the course of the day," said he. "Meanwhile let every thing in Grosvenor Square be prepared for their admittance." And Mr. Gossage bowed assentingly, and was dismissed.

While the momentous ballot, so nearly regarding Lord Monthermer's social interests,

was proceeding in Pall Mall, *he* was accordingly giving ear to the florid announcement of the head of the house of Maple, that the magnificent hangings they had the honour to submit to his lordship had been woven expressly for his use in Spitalfields, after the designs of a F.S.A., consulted by the late Lord Bridgnorth. He found that every thing he was required to approve, (and ultimately to pay for,) was "unique of its kind;" and the upholsterer concluded by demanding an interview with his lordship the following day on the premises in Grosvenor Square, to receive final instructions.

The readiness with which the *insouciant* heir accepted the engagements thus fastened upon him, were of course fertile in results of a similar nature. Coachmakers and silversmiths had all some capital article in hand, ordered by the late Lord Bridgnorth, or his father. Having no vouchers to show for their commissions,

they must of course "throw themselves on the generosity or sense of justice of their lordships' executors;" and poor Monthermer, pre-engrossed as he was, showed himself so much more generous than discerning, that but for a tardy word of warning from Messrs. Cognovit, he might, perhaps, have been brought to believe (on their own showing, and the witnessing of the sleek Mr. Gossage), that all Bond Street had been bespoken by his late uncle, and all St. James's Street by his cousin.

The newspapers, meanwhile, were careful to flourish forth to the world that "The splendid mansion of Lord Monthermer in Grosvenor Square was being completely remodernized after plans which the late noble possessors had not lived to complete; and that, after Easter, it would be once more opened to the fashionable world."

Such might be, indeed, the intentions of

Messrs. Gossage and Maple; but though sufficiently bewildered in his views of right and wrong, such were not the present projects of Lord Monthermer. Whatever might be the state of his feelings towards *divorcées* and bay-fillies, he was still of opinion that a family mansion bearing a funeral achievement upon its frontage, ought not to be converted into the house of feasting. An expression to some such purport probably escaped his lips; for the beautifiers and repairers soon found it necessary to take down this ensign of affliction, in order to complete the new verandahs expressly designed and ordered by the late lord; and by some accident or other, it never occurred to any of the parties concerned, that there was the smallest occasion for replacing so lugubrious an appendage.

Meanwhile industrious as were the paper-hangers and joiners in Grosvenor Square, the

time of Lord Monthermer was scarcely less actively occupied.

La Bruyère was only too true a commentator on human destinies, when he asserted that "the things we wish for never happen; or if they do, not till their charm is lost, by occurring at the wrong moment." Monthermer, who, at one period of his life, had been restrained only by the sober wisdom of his wife from rushing into a parliamentary career, and who had lamented the insufficiency of his income as a country baronet, chiefly because it crushed in the bud his desire to distinguish himself in public life, now took his seat in the upper house (and the date of his barony rendered it a highly honourable one), with far less emotion than he had formerly assumed his place on the bench of the Great Unpaid. His friends mustered strong to do him honour on the occasion. Royston, Loxley, and the Duke of Wex-

ford, accompanied him to the house; the Lord Chancellor smiled the same bland smile, and improvisated the same cordial compliments, which lord chancellors for the time being are accustomed to pour into the porches of the ears of all unshackled voters; while several old friends of Lord Shropshire, some of whom had been intimately acquainted with Lady Caroline Helmsley, made it a point of honour to do honour to the inauguration of her son.

But the most fastidious man of fashion could not have received their advances with an air of greater listlessness than the simple-hearted Monthermer. He replied by a distant bow to the civilities of the hand-shaking legislator of the woolsack; and scarcely deigned an answer to the friendly salutations of the gray-headed peers, who had no views upon his vote in expressing their satisfaction that a line so ancient

as that of "Delaval, Lord Monthermer," should retain a representative in their Order.

If the whole truth must be told, he had called in Downing Street, on his way to Westminster; and ascertained not only that the Naples' courier was arrived, but that there were "no letters for his lordship."—What could be the meaning of this omission?—Why was Gerald silent? How were his affairs proceeding?—Irritable and restless, he was eager till the unwelcome ceremony of the day was at an end, and himself and his friends released. He was to dine with the Duke of Wexford—a party made expressly for himself;—and he wanted the interval of an hour or two before dinner to ponder over his disappointment.

Fortunately, a guardian angel presided over the proceedings of the desultory man. On his road to Naples with Gerald Wroughton, Ludo-

vico, the confidential Italian servant of the latter, had provided his master's brother-in-law with a jewel of a French valet; who might not, indeed, have condescended to "*encanailler*" himself by entering the household of a mere country-baronet, had he not been smitten, like the monkey in the fable, with a whim for visiting foreign parts; and after sneering at the Carnival at Naples, he was now on the *qui vive* to mark his contempt for the inanities of a London season. But Monsieur Fortuné combined with his impertinence considerable tact; and had actually assimilated himself with his master's new dignities sooner than his master. It was his deportment which had secured to the listless Monthermer the first-rate honours of the Clarendon; it was to his aptitude for the acquisition of useful knowledge, that the listless Monthermer was now curtailed in his reveries by intelligence that the Duke of Wexford re-

joiced in the best cook, and was consequently the most punctual man in the metropolis; for his grace would of course have been discarded by Monsieur Coulis had he presumed to keep waiting such *entrées* as the *chef d'œuvres* of that immortal artist.

Scuffling through his toilet as carelessly as though unwarned that Flaszaski was to form one of the party at which his ill-tied tye was to be exhibited, Lord Monthermer was in South Street a quarter of an hour after receiving his valet's peremptory hint; and, as his notions of fortune and consequence were now expanding, he recalled to mind, as he drew up to the door, the limited nature of poor Wexford's income, and prepared himself in spite of Fortune's announcement, to find his new friend somewhat scantily supplied with the splendours and luxuries of life.

Lord Monthermer had yet to learn what may

be effected in town by the prudent administration of a bachelor establishment; or how much gratification may be contrived by a narrow-minded man out of an income of four thousand per annum.

Fontenelle has informed us that in order to *prolong* life, it is only necessary to have a good stomach and a bad heart. According to the theory and practice of the Duke of Wexford, it is easy to *enjoy* life, precisely on the same terms. His grace's digestion was unimpeachable; while his heart boasted the consistency of the jack-boot of a life-guardsman. An Irish absentee, he lived secure, during six months of the year from all claims on his hospitality; alternately ruralizing at some foreign bathing-place for the refreshment of his epigastric organs, and living upon his friends and relations, according as the qualities of their *cuisine* and cellar might endear them to his kinsmanly affections.

By this management, the maintenance of his snuggery in May Fair was discreetly forwarded. All that was wanting in magnificence in his establishment, was supplied by the most exquisite taste. His Grace had only one pair of carriage horses, but they were the most perfect in town; while his favourite hack was the admiration of the ring and the road. His dinner table admitted only of eight guests; but they were invariably selected with the most considerate deference towards the likings and dislikings of the party. The man of genius was rarely met with at his board; the lion or the tiger, *never*. Gastronomers have little predilection for the conversational species. They hate a man who talks much, or talks loud, to distract attention from the dish under discussion. They choose wit to be introduced at table,—as Champagne in France,—to enliven the dessert, not to interfere with the more solid

business of the day; and prefer a party of equal texture and moderate vivacity, to the excitement of the most brilliant society. Even Flaszaski was obliged to tame down his spirits when dining with Wexford, and doing homage to the talents of his cook.

With Lord Monthermer's present mood of mind, the subdued tone of the house perfectly accorded. The unmeaning hilarity of Lord Royston at the head of his own table had greatly disgusted him; and he was delighted with the few chosen dishes set before him, the few chosen domestics by whom he was attended, and the few chosen guests invited to enjoy them. The room was not over lighted; and no plate appeared upon the table beyond what was indispensable. A few massive salvers and goblets were on the buffet, and a finely-chased bacchanalian-looking cistern stood below; but on the board, there was only the choicest old

Dresden, and exquisitely engraved and quaintly shaped crystal. In addition to Monthermer, his host, Loxley, Royston, and Flaszaski, the party consisted of a cold, calm, cautious, Sir Kenelm Hulme,—Royston's cousin Colonel Bagot of the Guards, and the well-bred, ill-looking Earl of Carpynter.

Had poor Monthermer been less pre-occupied, he might have been startled at the contrast afforded by these grave personages to the garrulous argumentative guests he had latterly been accustomed to meet at Neapolitan tables. Well-bred foreigners talk incessantly during the process of dinner; but it is of any thing rather than the dish before them,—the most determined gastrophilite rarely hazarding an opinion upon a dinner within four-and-twenty hours, as if waiting the completion of his digestion to determine upon its merits. The most perfect banquet ever supervised by Brillat-

Savarin, probably elicited nothing more at the time than some cursory remark; though it was an *event* in the life of the gastronome, to be referred to with feeling and sentiment during the remainder of his days.

In England, on the contrary, in houses celebrated for the excellence of their *menu*, very little is said during the repast, and that little wholly in praise or blame of cooks and cookery. In one of the professed temples of gastronomy, such as the snug mansion of the Duke of Wexford, the affair of dinner assumes a truly serious aspect. The favoured guests appear conscious of the responsible duties devolving upon them. They feel that they are eating for the instruction and benefit of mankind. To *their* decree is submitted every luxurious novelty stewed to light by the exercise of Gallic ingenuity. To them, the Nesselrode pudding submits itself for its diploma of immortality:

from them the *sauté de cailles au verjus*, expects its sentence of election!

From the gallery of the House—in a court of criminal justice—Monthermer had often had occasion to study the gravest and most solemn physiognomies of the realm. Yet never, either at the sittings of the Royal Society or of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, had he noticed such profound magnanimity of aspect, as in the air assumed by Lord Carpynter, Lord Loxley, Sir Kenelm Hulme, and his host, while performing the slow deglutition of a new *Purée, au maigre, de laitances de carpe, poudrée de cerfeuil frit*,—a Lenten invention of the great Coulis!—

When the deed was done, they shook their heads gravely, and pronounced the name of Coulis as feelingly as some men would pronounce those of Bishop Heber or Philanthropist Howard. Hulme observed aside to Colonel Bagot, after

qualifying himself for the first *entrée* by a mouthful of bread and half a mouthful of Madeira, that Coulis was the Byron of the modern kitchen; while Royston remarked, with a face of disgust, that it was a lamentable thing to consider that, on Wexford's leaving town for the season, poor Coulis might, perhaps, be thrown into hands fatal to the development of his fine talent.

"Think of such a man being swamped at Windsor Castle!" cried he. "Think of Coulis shipwrecked in a sea of turtle-soup, against sirloins and haunches! Coulis ought not to enter any establishment, unless permitted to bring with him his own *aides*, a *rôtisseur*, *pâtissier*, and *confiseur*. By the way, my dear fellow," cried he, suddenly addressing Lord Monthermer, "he would be the very thing for *you* at Bridgnorth Castle!"

"Not if he required so large a brigade under his orders," replied Lord Monthermer, smiling.

"I mean to retain my uncle's cook, whom I have heard highly commended."

"Lor' Shrobshir' cook? I had the gratis regard for my Lor' Shrobshir'," observed Count Flaszaski; "but I vas never know poor Shrobshir' had a cook!"—

"*Had* he a cook that was ever heard of?"—inquired Lord Loxley, of Monthermer, by way of interpreting the obscure meaning of the Count.

"I think the man's name is Williams, or Williamson," said Monthermer, with perfect simplicity.

"Oh!—Williams—eh?—or Williamson."

"Ah! ah!" replied three or four of the party, in different cadences.

"Some monster, perhaps, from the Albion or King's Head!" added the reckless Royston. "However, let us do my poor friend justice. Shropshire, you know, was compelled, as lord

lieutenant for a county, to do many things against the grain. An artist of any merit would have died no other death than providing the hecatombs for his public days, and judges' dinners, and all those kind of horrors. A Williams or Williamson, or Smith, or Johnson, is worth twice the money of an Ude or Francatelle, for a squirefied country neighbourhood."

"Besides," added Lord Carpynter, feeling it a necessary act of politeness to relieve Lord Monthermer's family from such a load of obloquy, "I can myself attest that whenever Bridgnorth went down to stay with his father, he took his own *chef* and *maître d'hôtel*."

"Have you tried the *rissoles de pommes de terre aux anchois?*"—inquired the duke, of the right honourable baron who had that day been chaperoned into public life under his auspices. "Coulis had the recipe only yesterday, from Borel's predecessor, Thalabas, (whom the Parisians have

Judaized into 'Barabbas,') by Rothschild's courier. I tasted the *rissoles* myself at the Rocher, when I was last in Paris; and I must confess I think Coulis has improved on the original. I can detect a trifling tint of cayenne, which is only too often a necessary addition in this sherry-drinking and excitement-craving country."

"It is very good," said Monthermer, mistaking the *filets de sarcelles* he was eating for the recondite novelty so much lauded by his host. "But, to say the truth, I am no great judge of such matters. *My* notions of epicurism go very little beyond a fresh turbot and a fine haunch."

"Nor any other man's, I should imagine!" replied his cool neighbour, Sir Kenelm. "The curse of the thing is that one can't eat a fresh turbot worth speaking of nearer than Weymouth,—some people say, Devonshire; and as

to a haunch, there are not three parks in England where the venison is worth its currant jelly!—Last season, I will venture to say I sat down to fifty haunches; and not one that I could cite as even noticeable,—not one that could seduce a man into a third plate!"

"Here, for example," cried Flaszaski, as the second course was silently placed on table, without the jarring jingle of a *cloche* or spoon, "here is a *hors d'œuvre* which would drive Paris out of his senses, did my friend Chevet have senses to introduce him;—ploversh egg! —In Paris, they are at de trouble make de sauce to render swallowable de fishy parent bird, plover; yet have not wit to serve dese delicate little ting!"

"What a capital thing would be a *Mayonnaise de crevettes*, with plovers' eggs and olives instead of the eternal *garniture* of eggs and anchovies!"—murmured Lord Loxley, knitting

his brows, as if he had discovered the longitude.

"I will mention it to Coulis," added the Duke of Wexford, gravely. "Coulis is the most unpretending fellow in the world; he is the only man of his standing in the art, I ever knew, who would bear receiving a hint. But the fact is, he is an enthusiast,—he works *con amore*. He even makes excuses for the caprices of people's appetites. When the Russian ambassador dined with me, for instance, and I thought it right to forewarn poor Coulis that the man was in the habit of eating szapzugar cheese by way of Parmesan, with his *potage à la maccaroni*, instead of flying out as I expected, Coulis merely shrugged his shoulders and exclaimed "*Le malheureux!*"—adding after a few moments' reflection, "*Que voulez vous, Monsieur le Duc!—Cette nation là sent toujours son goudron!*"—

"Coulis is really a very good fellow!" said Lord Loxley, with feeling. "I found him the other morning standing, rapt into a fit of ecstasy, before Groves's shop.—"*Ah! Monsieur de Loxlie!*" cried he, pointing to the well-covered well-iced leaden tray, which made one's blood run cold. "*Parlez moi de ça!—Mais c'est un chef d'œuvre de l'art et de la nature! croyez moi, c'est à faire exposer au Louvre!*"—

"Poor Coulis was goodnatured enough to go over to Ireland with my friend Lord Ulster, last year," said Sir Kenelm Hulme, with a sneer.

"Good God!—what a mercy that he returned in safety!—That horrible disturbed district!—How fortunate that nothing happened to him. Ulster tells me they have a massacre on his estates every season."

"The only massacre which occurred in Coulis's time, consisted of two large flocks of

South Downs. The bailiff complained that they had been obliged to kill half a dozen a day; because my lord could not sup without devilled kidneys; or the French cook breakfast without *rognons à la brochette.*"

"Come—come! I won't hear a word against Coulis!"—exclaimed the duke. "More especially as here he comes, with his *avalanche à l'ananas,* which he never trusts into hands profane."

And behind the duke's chair, immediately appeared a very elegant young man, dressed *à la* Flaszaski, and assuming the air of proud humility which sits so well upon all distinguished artists.

The important process of dinner and dessert at an end, coffee was served in a book room which, but that the scent of Russia leather binding supplied that of *frangipane* or *vétiver,* might have been mistaken for a lady's

boudoir. Lord Loxley now inquired of Lord Monthermer, whether he should meet him at Almack's the following night.

"I have been nowhere at present," was his evasive reply.

"But you will of course begin?"

"I have been so long absent from London," Lord Monthermer began, and paused—

"That you feel *désorienté*, and disinclined to give yourself any trouble," said Loxley, filling up the sentence for his slow-paced friend. "I am not a ball man, myself. I make it a point never to set foot into Almack's after Easter, when better things are going on. But just now, one has nothing but one's club; and Almack's in March is really worth looking at."

"In March?—I should have thought that in the height of the season—"

"Oh! in the height of the season," interrupted Loxley, "it is like every other ball!

But just now, town is so empty they could not make it out without filling their lists with all sorts of people one never sees at any other time;—bankers' wives,—and baronets' wives,—the monied interest and that sort of thing. And upon my soul, there are devilish fine women among them!—women worth looking at, and with diamonds like a Russian favourite!"

"Of whom are you talking, Loxley?—Of Madame Zaradoska?" inquired Colonel Bagot, who had been perusing with a sardonic smile the marginal notes with which one of the leading wits about town had enriched the Duke of Wexford's bachelor-copy of the Book of Beauty.

"I am only persuading Monthermer to go with me to Almack's to-morrow night."

"Ah!—by the way—it is the first ball of the season. I always go myself to the first of

the season. I like to see the *débutantes*, frightened to death, and stealing about as if they fancied themselves *chaussées* in Cinderella's glass slipper, which they are afraid of breaking. One sees the same girls, three weeks afterwards, strutting about as if they were shod by the Veterinary College!"—

"And then it is so edifying," said Lord Carpynter, "to observe the mammas, undecided whether to be pleased or angry when they hear it whispered by old beaux, like Wexford and myself, that 'Lady Julia is pretty enough, but will never be what her mother was eighteen years ago!' I shall look in, if I can, to-morrow night. Do me the favour to dine with me," he continued, in a lower voice, addressing Lord Monthermer (to whom he was previously known as an intimate acquaintance of the Bridgnorth family), "and we will go together."

"I have no ticket," replied Lord Monthermer, in an embarrassed manner, "and I fear it is now too late to—"

"Oh! don't trouble yourself about a ticket!" cried Lord Carpynter. "I will send to my sister for a subscription. Are you on her list?"

"I am on *no* list," said Monthermer, not choosing to avow his utter ignorance concerning whom the sister of his friend might happen to be.

"Then apply to *her* for the remainder of the season," replied Lord Carpynter. "I will speak to Sophy about it. I dine at seven. I have no Coulis in *my* establishment; but as it is Wednesday, perhaps I may pick up a pleasant man or two;—for *man* reading, of course, member."

CHAPTER IV.

La ville est partagée en diverses sociétés qui sont comme des petites républiques, qui ont leurs loix, leurs usages, leurs jargon, et leurs mots pour rire.

LA BRUYERE.

THE late Duke of Norfolk (the most experienced *gourmand* in his least Catholic Majesty's three kingdoms), used to assert that "to a well-trained palate there was fish, flesh, and fowl, in a dinner at The Steaks; so great being the difference of flavour and consistency, between beef-steak and beef-steak." So likewise it may

be advanced that, in spite of the evenness of texture prevalent in the *surface* of the great world, there is variety in every course, and dissimilitude in every dish.

Lord Carpynter, in age, rank, and fortune, so closely assimilated to the Duke of Wexford, differed from him in a thousand peculiarities of taste and pretension. Lord Carpynter's bare, barren, old-fashioned residence in Spring Gardens, contained not a new invention, not a specimen of virtù. *His* books were old, and shabbily bound,—*his* arm-chairs comfortless, yet worn to the weft,—his dinner was ill-served, his room ill-lighted. But not a guest made his appearance there, the announcement of whose name would not have drawn rounds of applause, or hisses as vehement, from an assembled mob. Living familiarly and habitually among the celebrities of the time, the earl regarded as altogether unimportant those accessories of so-

cial life which, to the Duke of Wexford, a consorter with second-rate men, appeared of primary importance. When seated at Lord Carpynter's table, Lord Monthermer felt himself elevated in his own estimation by contact with his guests. They were men of whom he had heard—of whom he had read—concerning whom he had been questioned by the illustrious of other countries;—men to whom it mattered not a straw whether they dined on Sèvres china or Delft, or quaffed their claret from a Cellini goblet, or a sixpenny glass.

But no sooner were the sluice-gates of conversation opened, than he would have gladly receded from the torrent. They talked in a strain to which he was wholly unequal; for, to *him* the telegraphic signal-book of London jargon was still a sealed fountain. It is not alone dandyism and fashion that have a slang and argot of their own. Art, science,—but, above

all, politics,—are discussed at head-quarters each in its technical phrase, with a degree of plausibility that sounds like wisdom, and shrewdness that passes for wit. Lord Carpynter's guests were all public men, versed in the local jokes of parliament and office, and those thousand traditional trifles, of which a man who studies the state of parties in the morning and evening papers, knows about as much as a London common-councilman of the *bon mots* current in the privy-council of the Hoppo of Canton.

For a moment, poor Monthermer attempted to join in the conversation. But he found that his views of public men and measures were as crude and vulgar as the notions formed of Shakspeare by the apprentice who loiters about the door of the one-shilling gallery. Every opinion he advanced had been brought forward by Mr. Such-a-one,—discussed,—and exploded.

—He found, in short, that he was talking of poor-laws and church establishments, much as pathology would be expounded by some learned doctor of Tudor times, an adept in the healing art some centuries before the discovery of the circulation of the blood.

He was, however, better off than the preceding day. Though quite as much behindhand among the leading debaters as among the leading feeders of the times, there was some advantage in finding that, though he could teach nothing by talking, he might learn something by listening; and he accordingly perceived by coffee-time, that his wits were considerably sharpened,—his general views enlarged and his particular views circumscribed. — St. Leger Kerr had fascinated him by the ear as potently as small birds are fascinated by the eye; and if his Majesty's ministers had not absolutely gained a proselyte, conservatism had lost

one of those thorough-going right-divine upholders of church and state, who, under a Louis XI., a Richard III., or an Ernest I., would still persist in crying—" *Vive le Roi,—quand même!*"

Not one of Lord Carpynter's political *clique* but possessed that masterly tone of omnific self-sufficiency, which commands the confidence of the vulgar auditor as completely as the Eddystone Lighthouse that of mariners; Monthermer was dazzled by the affectation of magnanimously retaining an arduous post, not for their own advantage but for the benefit of the world. Not one of them condescended to offer *arguments* for the conversion of the newly-seated peer; they chose to consider it impossible he should entertain any other opinions than their own.

Deeply interested in the discussion of several questions in which Kerr and his coadjutors were

supposed to develop the intentions of ministers, Lord Monthermer was vexed to notice the rapid progress of the evening, and to feel that he was about to part from companions at once so entertaining and so edifying. That a man like St. Leger Kerr (who balanced the destinies of Europe on his forehead as mountebanks at a fair a wheatstraw on their chin) could be about to follow the fashionable multitude to do evil or folly in King Street, St. James's, appeared as impossible as for Peel to be elected rector of a radical university, or the lucre of ecclesiastical pelf to be squabbled for in parliament by a hierarchy by law established.—Strange, however, are the times we live in! On entering the glittering ball-room at Willis's, almost the first men he encountered were the very secretary, under secretary,—first lord and second commissioner,—whom he had recently heard display the argumentative solidity of a Gren-

ville and useful knowledge of a Huskisson, at the dinner-table of the Earl of Carpynter!—

But Monthermer could not devote many minutes to cogitation over their falling off. Before he had penetrated half the length of the ball-room, half its inmates had either claimed his notice as old acquaintances, or made known their desire to become new ones.—Some had been intimate with his father, some with his mother, some with his true-love John;—for no less a personage than the Duchess of Havering solicited an introduction, on the grounds of being sister to his friend Lord Colebrooke, and consequently aunt to Lady Adelaide de Vere! That he should feel flattered by this "supernatural soliciting" was natural enough; for what did Lord Monthermer know of similar distinctions lavished upon his worthless cousin, Lord Bridgnorth; when, "hot with the Gascon

grape," he occasionally mistook his way into decent society?—Lord Monthermer had never yet watched the process of lord-hunting common to the Hecubas of the aristocracy; nay—he had actually never before entered the Hymeneal temple of Willis, except for the three balls of a single subscription, immediately after attaining his majority; when he was a lanky young baronet, whose rentroll was known to be as circumscript as his whiskers,—both being pledged for better for worse, to the rustic beauty of Wroughton Hall. That the aunts, and mothers, and grandmothers, who were now so strenuous in offering to provide him with partners were desirous to render them his partners from that night forth and for evermore, was accordingly a surmise beyond his present pitch of self-conceit.

"What news do you bring us of dear Lady Wycombe?—When are we likely to see Lady

Wycombe?" was the question asked by every one who wished to prove to Lord Monthermer that they were worthy of his acquaintance. Some went so far as to express surprise that the patronesses should have ventured on an Almack's, previous to her arrival in town; and all seemed disposed to consider the world of fashion scarcely worth living in, till Lady Wycombe should rise upon it like the morning star (of the Morning Post). Even men,—from the *lusus naturæ* man of genius, to the *lusus artis* man of fashion, —inquired of him, almost without an exception, and apparently as a touchstone whereby to decide upon his eligibility as an acquaintance, whether at Naples he had seen much of Lady Wycombe?—

"Lady Wycombe,—Lady Wycombe!" murmured Monthermer, with a gleam of spleen against the rival of the divine Adelaide. "All

London seems engrossed by Lady Wycombe! Yet *who* cared for her at Naples, except the queen whom she worshipped, or Bagot, whom she admitted as a worshipper?—Strange, that a person who seems to exercise such despotic influence in London, should ever venture beyond Hyde Park Corner, to be shorn of her beams! — People, like bank-notes, have a local currency; as the cowries with which the Asiatics strew their garden-walks, form the coin of the realm of Congo or Bantam!"

Monthermer was not yet sagacious enough to appreciate the discernment of Lady Wycombe, in keeping up her golden popularity, by the very means he was presuming to arraign. He had yet to learn that ladies of fashion, like the sun, appear to shine the brighter for an occasional eclipse.

His meditations were interrupted by a pro-

posal from Lord Carpynter to present him to his "sister;" and, having followed his guide towards a group of tall, hard, highbred-looking women, Monthermer, observing him whisper a few words to the tallest and largest of them, immediately dedicated to her his bow of acknowledgment. The ticket he had that morning received, signed with the magic autograph of "S. Kimbolton," apprized him that he had the honour of being smiled upon by Sophia, Duchess of that name.

Her grace was a commanding, singular-looking woman, with fine features somewhat hollowed by forty years of the cares and pleasures of the great world; and a complexion whose patchy bloom rendered the beholder more conscious than usual of the charm inherent in youthful delicacy. The dear duchess was what is called, in phrase polite, *un peu passée;* that is, she would have been considered old and

ugly, had she not been a patroness of Almack's.

Thanks, however, to that distinction and other dazzling associations, she still contrived to pass for a beauty. Some called her a fine woman,—some a handsome woman,—some a distinguished-looking woman,—some a striking woman;—none saw or spoke of her as she was. Her diamonds were brilliant and well set; her dress, rich and judicious; and above all, she possessed that peculiar air of "*race*" which imparts a varnish to beauty where it exists, and offers a plausible apology where it does *not*.

She, too, inquired eagerly after Lady Wycombe; but Monthermer fancied he could discover a gleam of satisfaction in the duchess's large eyes, when he expressed his belief that her ladyship would not be in England before the end of May. "It was understood at

Naples," he observed, (and some degree of significance qualified his smile as he repeated the words,) "that she would not move before Lord Portumna, as they would probably travel together."

The patchy colour on the duchess's cheek, instantly assumed an even and permanent crimson;—and unobservant as Monthermer was, he could not but perceive a smile exchanged between two or three of the tall duchess's lofty companions, while Lord Carpynter stood biting his lips with evident embarrassment. It was clear to Monthermer that he had blundered; but where or how he could not conjecture. Compassionating perhaps the feelings of annoyance and compunction under which he conceived his *protégé* to be labouring, Lord Carpynter stepped forward to his relief, by recalling to his memory that, when settled at Bridgnorth Castle, the Duke and Duchess of

Kimbolton would be among his nearest neighbours.

To this direct appeal to his politeness, the necessary compliments flowed readily in reply.

"On which side of the county are the estates of the Duke of Kimbolton situated?" he inquired; whereupon, the tall ladies shrugged their shoulders, that any one in England could be ignorant of the whereabout of one of its finest and most fashionable country-seats; and the duchess mentioned the nearest post-town, secretly pitying herself for the humdrum country neighbour she had lately acquired.

"Not very far, then, from Woodlands?" he remarked. "Within easy distance of the Colebrookes?"—

"I have not the honour of being acquainted with the Colebrooke family," said the duchess, coldly.

"Indeed?—Yet surely Woodlands is not

above eight miles from Standington, which you say is your post-town?"

"I am not at all aware."

"Hitherto, I believe," persisted the unsuspecting Monthermer, "Lord Colebrooke has lived chiefly at his family place, in Suffolk,—Colebrooke Hall. But I know they intend, for the future, to pass the greater part of the autumn at Woodlands."

"They will be a great addition to the county!"—observed the Duchess of Kimbolton, in a tone whose bluntness was more fatal than sharpness, like the axe that beheaded Anna Boleyn. But still, Lord Monthermer neither heard nor saw.

"Woodlands is about five-and-twenty miles, I fancy, from Bridgnorth Castle?"—he continued, fancying every one as much interested in the question as himself.

"I really know nothing about it. I think I recollect poor dear Lord Bridgnorth making some excuse about country neighbourship, when there was a report that he was to marry the divorced Lady Sherburne, and people inquired what could have given rise to so scandalous a rumour."

It was now Lord Monthermer's turn to bite his lips, and the Duchess's to disregard the confusion she had created!—"Lady Clementina will you come across the room with me, to say a civil word to Princess Radzivil?" she inquired of one of her towering companions. And Monthermer, already deserted by Lord Carpynter, found himself alone in the crowd.

To conceal his chagrin at the intelligence he had just received, he turned toward the quadrille nearest to him, affecting to watch the dancers. To his great surprise, he was instantly greeted with a familiar recognition by

one of the youngest and fairest of the set, whose person he could by no means recall to mind. It was a mistake,—evidently a mistake on the part of the young lady. She was pretty, young, graceful,—but he knew nothing about her. He had been already saluted, that evening, by half a dozen old acquaintances whom he had altogether forgotten. But in the lady's case, there could be no foundation for pretension to his recognition. He could not have been at Eton or Oxford with *her!*

Still, however, she looked smilingly towards him; and, at the conclusion of the dance, actually guided her partner towards him, with an extended hand.

"Sir William, I am sure you do not know me,—I am sure you do not recollect me!" cried the pretty blushing girl, almost pressing his hand. "I suppose I am grown out of your remembrance!—How long have you been

in England?—Have you heard from dear Emma?"

"I saw Miss Wroughton only a week ago," replied Monthermer, now assured that it was his own memory which was at fault. "She was quite well."

"And her brother,—how did you leave her brother?" inquired the fair unknown, in a less assured voice.

"Gerald is perfectly well. His winter in Italy has completely restored him."

"My father heard from him soon after his arrival at Naples. I know papa was very anxious about him when last he was staying with us at High Grove."

And these words cleared up the doubts of Monthermer. The Almack's beauty was no other than little Mary De Ligne, who as a child had been a frequent visitor at Helmsley Abbey.

"Are Mr. and Mrs. De Ligne in town?" he inquired, recollecting how disparagingly he had spoken of De Ligne to Emma Wroughton.

"Oh! no;—I am on a visit to mamma's cousin, the Duchess of Kimbolton, in Portman Square. You must come and see me, and tell me about the dear children and Emma."

And Lord Monthermer had only time to promise, before his little friend was summoned away by an imperious gesture from her majestic chaperon.

CHAPTER V.

Besides, you waste the treasure of your time with a foolish knight.

TWELFTH NIGHT.

"WHOM did you say?—a Sir William Helmsley?"—inquired the Duchess of Kimbolton of the young cousin to whom, having no daughters of her own, she had undertaken the arduous duties of a season's chaperonage,—on learning that Miss De Ligne had invited a Northamptonshire friend to pay her a morning's visit. "And who on earth is Sir William Helmsley?"

"Lady Helmsley was my brother Johnny's godmother."

"I did not ask you, my dear, concerning a *Lady* Helmsley. I asked about a Sir William. But no matter, half my object is attained by learning that there *is* a Lady Helmsley; and that you are therefore less blameable than I supposed, in inviting this person to visit you. But I have had already occasion to remind you, Mary, that I must not be compromised by your bringing around you, and consequently around myself, a circle of Northamptonshire squires. I am not used to that sort of thing. It has been one of the objects of my life to *brusquer* such connexions. I do not mean to say that your father is not an excellent person. We were all delighted when he thought fit to propose to my poor dear aunt, Lady Mary Broderick's daughter,—for your grandmother had nothing but her pension, poor soul, to

bring up eleven children, with the decency due to her birth and connexions. But with all my regard for Mr. and Mrs. De Ligne, I must be excused from encumbering my visiting book with the common herd of their acquaintance."

During this harangue, the duchess seemed to be taking a numerical survey of the innumerable rings on her fingers, and trying the springs of the huge bracelet clasps that stood out conspicuous on her arm; her highly-ornamented hand being judiciously displayed on the sable back of a King Charles's spaniel, while her foot reposed, in all the vulgar brilliancy of embroidered stockings and satin shoes, upon a footstool, placed as far off as decency would allow. Little Mary De Ligne, who, with all her naïveté, was capable of shrewd observations, could not help thinking, as she surveyed these gratuitous efforts and labours of vanity, that when people

present so vast a surface of human nature to the world as the gigantic duchess, they ought to be more measured in their affectation. Whatever airs *she* gave herself must necessarily be such very *great* airs; and, when angry, she rolled as majestically as a seventy-four in a gale!

"I will be more cautious another time," said the little damsel. "I acted, foolishly perhaps, on the impulse of the moment; for, as Prince Talleyrand observed the other night, 'We ought to beware of a *premier mouvement*, for that *may* chance to be a right one.'"

"You fancy it a virtuous action, I presume, to cultivate the society of persons whose sole merit consists in being zeros in the account of society?"

"I thought it a *prudent* action to appear delighted in renewing my acquaintance with one whom I saw honoured by the especial notice of your grace."

"*Me*, child?—*I* notice a Sir Thomas Helmsman?—Oh! *dear*, no!—Be assured I never spoke to any person of the name in the course of my existence!" cried the duchess, who, like most of her caste, was in the habit of reading in the daily papers the great-letter opinions of editors rather than the vulgar, dry enumeration of facts entitled news; so that she knew no more of Lord Shropshire's successor than she had learned from the great-world gossip of the day on which the earl had breathed his last,—viz., that he had bequeathed his fortune to the nephew, who was heir to his barony of Monthermer. She seldom stooped to particulars. It was enough to know the outline of people's private histories; a Duchess of Kimbolton was of too much consequence to care for the minutiæ of any one's affairs but her own.

Scarcely, however, had she concluded her disparaging ejaculations, when the object of

their discussion made his appearance; and Mary was scarcely less surprised to observe the graciousness with which Sir William Helmsley was received by her grace, than the duchess to remark the familiarity subsisting between Lord Monthermer and her little *protégée*. She began to think the Squire's daughter might be a trifle more sagacious than she had suspected, to have gained ground so rapidly with one of the best matches about town; and decided that it would be turning the stupid country neighbour she had acquired to some account, if she could contrive to instal Miss De Ligne mistress of Bridgnorth Castle before the close of the season.

With these views, the deportment of Lord Carpynter's sister underwent a complete thaw towards the luckless wight whom she had so bitterly reprehended her brother, the preceding night, for presenting to her acquaintance.

After expressing a desire that the intimacy she hoped to perfect in Northamptonshire might commence in town, she invited him to dinner, to her opera-box, her box at the French play, her pew at Marylebone; bespoke him to accompany them to the Zoological the following Sunday, to the Horticultural the following Monday; there scarcely seemed days enough in the week, to satisfy her grace's amiable desire of cultivating the acquaintance of her brother's friend.

Though Mary had now managed to discover that the brother-in-law of her dear friends Emma and Gerald was a peer of the realm as well as a widower, she could scarcely understand by what magic he had effected so favourable an impression on the usually fastidious duchess. Lord Monthermer was certainly handsome and sensible; but Mary had been

so accustomed to regard him as deriving his importance from his union with the angelic Marcella Wroughton, that now the wife was gone, she could not bring herself to regard the husband with much reverence. She had been glad to see him at Almack's, for she wanted to inquire about Gerald; but her curiosity once satisfied by learning that his brother-in-law was expected in England in the course of a few weeks, she foresaw that the duchess would repent the civilities that were likely to encumber them with so mediocre a companion in their amusements of the season. She even ventured to hint her opinion on the subject, when Lord Monthermer had taken leave; upon which, the duchess launched forth into a panegyric upon his mind, manners, and accomplishments, which induced the little country damsel to wonder within herself what

could constitute so vast a distinction between a Lord Monthermer and a "Sir Thomas Helmsman!"

Meanwhile, Monthermer was scarcely less surprised than Mary at finding himself, in the space of twelve hours, transferred by the duchess from the frigid to the torrid zone of her acquaintanceship. Eager to learn all that her grace's malice might have to unfold with regard to Lady Adelaide, he little doubted that, in the course of the numerous courses of natural history and family dinners proposed by the duchess, he should hear all he either wished or dreaded to know respecting the family at Woodlands. He regretted that Easter was about to intervene a sudden break in the golden chain of his new pleasures. But there was still a week for the enjoyment of London, previous to the disagreeable necessity of revisiting Wroughton Hall; the brilliant week preceding Passion-

week, which is always one of the gayest of the London season; being to protestant England —what the last of the carnival represents on the continent—a temporary farewell to the pomps and vanities of fashion.

To go down to Wroughton, and submit to be cross-questioned by Emma concerning the state of affairs at Naples, was a trial for which he could scarcely arm his patience at such a moment. Gerald's unaccountable silence was already a sufficient source of uneasiness, without being required to imagine motives to satisfy the misgivings of the family. The merest monosyllable uttered on so delicate a subject, might compromise himself. What would he not have given for a reasonable pretext for remaining in town, without the hypocrisy of affecting peculiar interest in the fitting up of his house in Grosvenor Square; his apathy concerning which momentous arrangement, had already

called forth a variety of wondering interjections from that painstaking man of *virtù*, the Duke of Wexford.

"Where are you going for the holidays?"—inquired Lord Royston, one morning, when he had sauntered into Lord Monthermer's rooms to prevent his breakfasting in peace.

"I have business which I fear will take me into Northamptonshire," said Monthermer, carelessly.

"Oh, damn business!—Come with me to Melton.—I dare say we shall get a couple of tolerable days—besides Croxton Park."

"I am not a very ardent sportsman," said Monthermer, with embarrassment.

"I could have sworn it!" muttered Lord Royston; adding, in an audible tone, "Loxley wants me to go down with *him* to the Haverings; but I do so abhor those Easter parties!

It is such a mere *réchauffé* of Christmas; and Christmas without frost and snow and truffled turkeys, is the devil!"—

"I have heard that the Duchess of Havering makes her house remarkably pleasant."

"*C'est selon!*—I dare say it is pleasant enough to young ladies on the matrimonial scent, who are always dying to show off in *tableaux* and private theatricals; or to wits, who are glad of any opportunity to get into good company. But the hunting in Hertfordshire is only fit for tailors and common councilmen; and as to one's evening amusement, there are two old hags of aunts of Havering's, who always insist upon cutting in and spoiling one's whist. No! I told Loxley, at once, that the thing was a nuisance; and if I can't get you down with me to Melton, I shall probably take Wexford's advice, and stay in town."

"The duke remains, then, for the recess?"

"Of course! You see it puts Coulis out, to have him leave town. A fortnight lost in the season, is ruin to such a fellow as Coulis;—a fortnight of dead-letter would put his hand deucedly out, and cut short his *petits profits*. It would not be fair in a man who keeps a *chef* of the *calibre* of Coulis, to go running out of town on all occasions. 'Besides,' as Wexford himself observes, 'where does one live as in London?—Where does one get eatable fish, but in London?—Where does one find presentable poultry, but in London?—Where, in short, is one half so well off?' "—

"Then why trouble yourself to go to Melton?"—

"Oh! *my* case is different. *I* have no *cordon bleu* to endear my home to me. And as to Melton, I don't care particularly to go; only Flaszaski was saying last night that if you were

of the party, and were going to send your horses, he should like well enough to run down for a few days."

"He does me much honour," said Monthermer. "Flaszaski seems a good-humoured, gentlemanly, entertaining fellow. I had always heard him spoken of as a *mauvais sujet*, and am agreeably disappointed. If I *can* manage to get to Melton, it will delight me to make up a party with you both."

"By Jove!—suppose we were to try a day or two at Brighton?"—cried Royston, struck with the lucky inspiration of a new mode of getting rid of himself.—"Flaszaski is the sort of absent *nonchalant* fellow who will never dream or inquire where one is taking him, if once one got him into a chaise and four. He would not guess whereabouts we had him, till he awoke from his trance at the Clarence. I persuaded

him last night that young Harford was the O'Connor Don, and made Harford believe that Flaszaski was Mazilier the dancer."

"*What* Harford?"—inquired Lord Monthermer, with sudden interest in the conversation.

"That stupid ass who is to come into such a monstrous fortune one of these days!"—

"You are mistaken. *That* stupid ass is *attaché* at Naples—where he officiates as shadow to Lord Portumna, and butt to your brother."

"Exactly. It was Leck who inflicted him upon me.—Harford arrived in town on Tuesday. We dined together yesterday at the Travellers'."

"Where is he to be found?"—inquired Monthermer, starting from the breakfast-table.

"'Pon my soul, I can't say. I never asked him. Perhaps my fellows can tell you. Do you wish particularly to see him?—Where do you dine?"

"With the Duchess of Kimbolton, early, to accompany her to Drury Lane."

"Ay—ay! I recollect. There is a new play to-night, written by some one in society, which is either to be run down or cried up,—I forget which, and it does not much signify.—Very likely you may meet Harford there. He seems the sort of ape to go wherever he finds other people are going."

"I should be glad to see him this morning," persisted Lord Monthermer. "I wonder he has not been to me: I wonder he did not bring me letters."

"By the way, if you want to hear about Wroughton, Harford tells me he is in high feather; and that, just as I always expected, he has thrown over the lady at Naples."

"What lady?"

"*What* lady!—Why there is but one there now, I fancy!—Lady Wycombe is on he

road home. Lady Wycombe is arrived at Rome."

"You allude then to—"

"Mr. St. Leger Kerr, my lord, and Mr. Strangways," said Lord Monthermer's servant, throwing open the door to admit two inopportune visitors, whom his master had scarcely command over himself to receive with patience.

"A thousand pardons for so early an intrusion!" exclaimed Kerr, when the hands of both had been duly shaken, in obedience to the hypocrisies of civilized life.—"It is a mercy to the world that I scarcely ever pay a morning visit, for my avocations leave me no liberty after two o'clock; and of the half-dozen men for whom I care sufficiently to pass a friendly half-hour with, now and then, I usually find three with lather on their chins and razors in their hands."

"I am happy to see you, late or early," replied Monthermer, wishing him at Nova Zembla.—"*My* hours are not those of a London man."

"Any thing *new?*"—inquired Mr. Strangways, the under-secretary (who was of course *au fait* to every thing stirring in all quarters of the globe) to Royston, who was skimming the advertisements of a morning paper.

"Nothing whatever!—Hem—hem—hem—'Ornamented cottage plate.—Cox and Savory—Cornhill.' Eh?—I fancied Cox and Savory were the Seidlitzpowder people in Regent Street?—No, by Jove!—that's Savory and Moore,—Savory and *more*, eh?—like one of Coulis's entrées!—Devilish fair,—eh?"

"Any foreign intelligence?—any thing from Algiers?"—persisted Mr. Strangways, who had reasons of his own for desiring Lord Royston not to overhear the efforts of eloquence with

which his ministerial colleague was spreading birdlime over the olive-branch extended towards the new peer.

"Algiers?—Who the devil cares about Algiers,—except in a piratical melo-drame at Astley's?—Hem—hem—hem—"Masdeu,—genuine Sicilian Terra mota wine at one shilling and sixpence per bottle,—considerable allowance to the trade,"—one and sixpence per bottle, eh?—three shillings cheaper than French blacking!—'Lost,—a black and tan spaniel,'—muttered his lordship, interrupting himself.

"Do you find any thing?"—demanded Mr. Strangways, still continuing to press the news-gatherer into conversation.

"I wish I could find this devil of a dog!—answers to the name of Spring,—reward, fifteen guineas and no questions asked.—Why, I once saw an elderly gentleman advertised for, at *one* guinea,—and I dare say they asked as

many questions as Pinnock's Catechisms!—*New*, did you say?—Yes!—here is something wonderfully new—'A Guernsey cabbage, which had attained the gigantic height of seven feet six inches, was cut last week in the garden of the Rev. Richard Taylor, at Battersea Rise.' I say, Strangways, my boy!—I recommend you to plant an avenue of them from Charing Cross to that famous National Gallery of yours, as the only timber trees not likely to render it damp for the pictures!"

"An avenue?—*Das is nicht in mein Department*,' as Kotzebue's Aulic Councillor says in the 'Epigram.' *That* belongs to the Woods and Forests."

"Never mind!—you can propose it to your right honourable colleague in the course of the holidays. I suppose you will all eat your turtle, and play your rubber together at the Duchess of Havering's, or some other premier-

harbouring villa? — eh? It strikes me that there is more real public business hugger-muggered over among you at these Easter meetings, than you get through in fifty fair-dealing cabinet councils."

"Certainly. The Catholic Question, you know, was settled one snowy Christmas at Muddlethorpe; and the Canada business is to be fought over again and settled at Havering House; only we

> Consider it decent, between me and you,
> That the other two houses should settle it too."

"Take care that settling-day don't prove Black Monday," replied Royston, throwing down the newspaper on finding Lord Monthermer engrossed by St. Leger Kerr, leaving *him* to be played upon by one of the sharpest dogs of the ministerial flock, kept to bark and show his teeth to the enemy whenever intimidation was wanted.

"You will recollect to send me Harford's address?"—cried Monthermer to Lord Royston, when he saw him sauntering out of the room.

"Yes!—Immediately!"—replied Royston. And instead of proceeding to his rooms to make inquiry of his servants, he went his way straight down stairs and proceeded to White's, with no more regard to Monthermer or Harford than to his own word.

St. Leger Kerr, meanwhile, had not been losing his time. Albeit well used to the triumph of convincing the refractory and softening the obdurate, he was himself surprised at the ductility with which his political proselyte suffered himself to be persuaded that to give his vote or proxy to government, was to devote his best services to the country. For St. Leger Kerr, who fancied himself practising upon a dupe, was a dupe in his turn; attributing to his own oratory the mere consequence of

mental pre-occupation in his victim. While Kerr was descanting upon the state of public feeling, the temper of the times, and the disposition of the country, Monthermer kept striving to disengage himself in order to renew his inquiries of Lord Royston; like poor Spencer Percival struggling to escape in the lobby of the House, on the eve of his assassination, from Matthew Montagu of button-holding memory, who continued through life to attribute the restlessness of the predestined minister, to a mysterious foreboding of the fate that awaited him on the morrow.

"Satisfied at all events with the "Ay," which he received as a guarantee for the "ayes" of a whole session, the Home under-secretary now proposed to the Foreign to continue their promenade, the blind leading the blind; while Monthermer profited by their departure to dispatch his servant with further inquiries to

his friend in the adjoining rooms. But Lord Royston was absent. He had not returned after visiting his noble neighbour. Even the groom and valet were missing.

Monthermer's impatience was now almost uncontrollable.—But what was to be done ?—In Paris or any other continental city, the humblest stranger recently arrived, may be traced by the aid of the police. But in London, vast,—straggling,—free,—independent London,—a man may abide a century undiscovered, unless of sufficient rank or notoriety to meet the notice of the manufacturers of newspaper paragraphs. Mr. Harford, however great in prospect or his own estimation, was at present unknown to fashionable fame. The Clarendon knew him not; and Monthermer, in despair, resolved to proceed to the Travellers' in hopes of meeting Lord Royston, whom he overtook sauntering along Pall Mall.

"So you have got rid of the ravens who were pecking the eyes out of your head?" —inquired his lordship, "I had not patience to sit by and see those Downing-street birds of prey at their dirty work."

"You promised to send me Harford's direction," said Lord Monthermer, coming to the point.

"Did I?—It would have been of no use to you;—for I have just called at Fentons', and he is out. Come with *me*. I dare say we shall find him at the Travellers'." And Monthermer complied. "What an ass Harford is to venture on London in the season, before he fairly comes into his fortune! He will get wedged in among the mediocrities, and find it deucedly difficult to recover himself."

"I believe his family allow him a thousand or fifteen hundred a year."

"Worse than nothing, in my opinion. Peo-

ple know what to do with a fellow like my brother Leck, who has nothing to live on,—or Flaszaski, who lives on his wits. But a man with a thousand a year and no wits, has neither enjoyment nor credit. I can't fancy in what capacity Harford means to set up, to escape being a nonentity?—Can he *do* any thing?"

"In what way?"

"I mean, is he accomplished?—Can he ride?—Can he drive?—Can he smoke?—is he a fellow of any force of character?"—

"Mrs. Longman Tomkinson used always to be quoting his bon mots. But she was quite the woman to mistake impertinence for wit."

"Mrs. Longman Tomkinson?—Who in the name of the Christian community, is Mrs. Longman Tomkinson?"—

"The *fashionable* Mrs. Longman Tomkinson, who lives in Carlton Gardens, and gives fine fêtes."

"Never heard of the woman in my existence!"

"She was in the best society at Naples, and gave us a splendid ball."

"Heavenly powers!—what people *do* get into society abroad!—Surely Leck and Lady Wycombe did not visit a person of that description?"—

"Indeed they did. Every soul in Naples was at her fancy-ball."

"A Mrs. Longman Tomkinson, and a fancy ball!—What an anticlimax. However *tout chemin ne mène* pas *à Rome*!—and though Bagot and his liege lady may have ventured to compromise themselves, by knowing such a woman at a thousand miles' distance from Almack's, I answer for it that the strongest glass made by Dollond will not enable them to discover this Queen of the Sandwich Islands, if she should ever run against them at the opera.

As to Harford, he had better go up in a balloon, or volunteer for Don Carlos, or learn to dance the Romaïka and teach it to all the young ladies in town, if he hopes to escape from his present obscurity. For want of a better road to distinction, I have known more than one man about town eat or play himself into society. A man who understands *la cuisine* is really an acquisition at a dinner table; just as a man who is willing to lose his money, is an acquisition at the card-table. It would be an act of charity to give a hint on the subject to young Harford. *Il a bien du chemin à faire, avant de se dégourdir !*"

CHAPTER VI.

"When they talk of politics and Parliament," said Kean, (alluding to his aristocratic patrons,) "I do not understand them; and when they talk of acting, *it is such stuff!*"—LIFE OF KEAN.

AFTER all the pains taken by Lord Monthermer to obtain an interview with Mr. Harford, he proved to be the bearer of no letter—no message—no any thing! The attaché had brought from Naples his insignificant self, and a far higher opinion of its merits than he had carried with him from England. He was come to amuse himself in London, and amuse others at his expense.

To Lord Royston, whose brother Alexis had condescended to borrow his money and lend him a few cast-off impertinences, Harford had not hesitated to hazard a thousand flippant remarks concerning Wroughton's pretensions to the hand of Lady Adelaide de Vere. But Lord Monthermer, with fifty thousand a year and a fine castle or two, was not to be so cavalierly dealt with; and the detached attaché, anxious to stand well with a man of whose fêtes for the ensuing season the *Morning Post* daily announced such wonders, merely stated, in a general way, all he thought most likely to prove agreeable to his auditor; "that Gerald had escaped from the clutches of the divorcée,—that Lady Adelaide was thrown over, for the fiftieth time, in her matrimonial speculations, and coming to England to try her hand at a new game."

Lord Monthermer's cheeks had scarcely

cooled from the flush of indignation with which he listened to this insolent farrago, when he found himself seated at the Duke of Kimbolton's dinner-table; which was as stupid as the stiffness of the dull duke and the pomposity of the self-sufficient duchess could make it. There was no one to share with him in its tediousness but Mary De Ligne, who stood too much in awe of her chaperon to indulge in her usual lively sallies, and a problematical Mr. Monkton, who appeared to be the odd man of the family: *viz.* a man elevated in his own eyes by being permitted to breakfast, dine, or sup five days in the week with a duke and duchess, at the cost of executing such of their little commissions as were too confidential for the footmen, and not sufficiently confidential for the man of business.

"Do you go down to Bridgnorth Castle for the holidays?" inquired the duchess of Lord Monthermer.

"I—I am not decided—my plans are not quite fixed," stammered his lordship, whose thoughts were running upon the Chiaja rather than upon the North road.

"I suppose Emma and the children will come to stay with you as soon as you are settled in Grosvenor-square?"—inquired Mary, broaching a still more troublesome question.

"I am not altogether certain. My little girl is delicate. Perhaps she will be better at Wroughton Hall," replied Lord Monthermer, recalling to mind, with self-reproach, that he had not yet made the invitation.

"But you cannot leave her there alone; and Miss Wroughton with Mrs. Margaret, will of course come to town to meet her brother?" persisted Mary. And Lord Monthermer could not repress a deep sigh as he replied,—"So I should imagine. Yes, they will certainly come to town to meet Gerald."

Eager to avoid the discussion of his projects, he now affected the most urbane attention to the twaddle with which Mr. Monkton was striving to amuse the unamusable duke; a recapitulation, with ample dilutions, of all the fiddle-faddle of all the paragraphs of all the morning papers. The odd man, aware that his noble friend was too indolent to learn any thing that is acquired by reading, felt that he was safe in giving as *on dits*, anecdotes which were already *on imprimes*.

But though the duchess perceived that her purposed victim was not in the humour to play the Corydon with Mary, she did not think it necessary to make him over as an auditor to two persons whom she regarded so contemptuously as the duke and his odd man:—for want of a better listener, she was glad to adopt him as her own. She had been that morning to the British gallery; and proceeded to prove by her

criticisms, that she was a better artist than Wilkie, Stanfield, Calcott, or Landseer; she had been the preceding night to the Ancient Concert, and did not hesitate to make herself out a finer composer than Handel, and a better leader than Smart. Lord Monthermer, of course, bowed acquiescingly to the criticisms which she dictated with the measured deliberation of a practised proser; and, thus encouraged, she proceeded to prove that Bulwer wrote almost as ill as Scott, and that Stanley spoke almost as vilely as Peel.

"Did you visit Thorvalden's atelier as you came through Rome?" she inquired, of Lord Monthermer.

"I was travelling express—I had not a moment to lose."

"Perhaps you have not devoted your time to the study of the fine arts?"

"I am ashamed to say that I have not. All

I pretend to is a devoted sense of the beautiful; and when passing through Rome, on my way to Naples, I—"

"It appears to me quite impossible to pass near the *studio* of an eminent artist, without a visit," interrupted the duchess, who talked for the pleasure of talking,—never with a view of obtaining an answer.

"But then your grace's visits are so appreciated and courted!" ejaculated Mr. Monkton. "A criticism from the Duchess of Kimbolton may secure perfection and immortality to the work in progress!"

"I flatter myself I have been of some little service to the leading artists of the day," observed the duchess, benignly. "It is true I have never studied painting, sculpture, or music; but I have a singularly correct eye, a singularly correct ear. Few people, I fancy,

are better qualified than myself to deliver an opinion. Chantry dined here the other day, and I could not forbear renewing the advice I have for the last twenty years given him, to lay aside busts:—(busts are work for a mere carver, busts are below the attention of a man of genius)—and stick to the poetical branch of his art. Chantry excels in the ideal; but Chantry has no knowledge of nature."

"Very true!" observed the odd man; and "Very true!" echoed Lord Monthermer, not certain whether her grace were talking of Chantry, Thorvaldsen, or Jack the Painter.

"Now, there is poor Maclise, who is a mere colourist, who has never got beyond the mechanical part of his art,—who has no warmth, no imagination, no poetry in his soul;—*there* is a man who, as I often tell him, ought to adhere to portrait. If he chose it,

Maclise might become the successor of Lawrence, and enrich himself as the first portrait-painter of the day."

"Very true!" responded the odd man; and "Very true!" again echoed Lord Monthermer.

"But artists are proverbially the most obstinate,—the most *entêté* set of people!—It is just like the young author whose play we are going to see to-night. I support the piece by my presence, because I have been warmly solicited for my patronage. But I told the young man frankly from the first, I could by no means ensure its success. The misguided young man has been above following the bent of his own genius. The moment I cast my eye over his MS., I saw at once that he had mistaken himself. His line is comedy—manifestly comedy; but, like all ambitious pretenders, he has chosen to soar at once into tragedy."

"Foolish fellow!" muttered Monckton.

"Remarkably foolish!" reiterated the absent Monthermer.

"I thought it my duty, indeed, to relate to him the anecdote told of Voltaire and Laharpe. Laharpe, as you all know, arrived in Paris bringing letters of recommendation to Voltaire, at that time the great high priest of French literature. 'Another would-be man of genius!' observed the caustic poet. 'Pray what is your object, young man, in coming to Paris?—How do you purpose to distinguish yourself?'—'By writing tragedies,' replied Laharpe. '*Tragedies?*'—cried Voltaire—'Bah! you are too young for tragedies. Write comedies for the next ten years, and tragedies will come of themselves.'"

"Admirable!" cried Monkton.

"Admirable!" echoed Monthermer; while Mary De Ligne ventured to observe, "I always fancied that it was for the composition of co-

medies Voltaire deemed his visitor to be too young. I have always seen the anecdote related in a directly different sense."

"*Seen?*" reiterated the duchess with contempt. "Where does one ever find an anecdote correctly related in print?—Books are the greatest deceivers upon earth. It is only what I *hear* that I ever venture to believe; and I *heard* that fact related a hundred times in my childhood by no less a person than the celebrated Abbé De Lille."

"But might not a very young child be apt to misunderstand and misappropriate the story? Is it not even likely that Delille might, purposely deteriorate a *mot* of Voltaire?"

"Miss De Ligne,—may I have the honour of taking wine with you?" inquired the discreet Mr. Monckton, trembling lest the young lady's pertinacity should provoke the explosion of a storm, likely to involve the whole party in its

perils; while Lord Monthermer made up his mind to return at rare intervals to a house, of which the lady paramount was so accustomed to dictate to her husband and dependants, that she would not allow even a visitor to entertain an opinion of his own.

Moreover, the usual disagreeables inseparable in London from a party to the play, were miserably apparent. The whole morning, Monthermer had been hurry-skurrying in order to be in time for a dinner at half-past five; yet from the pause that followed his arrival and the murmurs of the duchess against the failure of almost every dish on table, it was clear that the *chef* and butler had experienced as much difficulty in boiling a turbot, and icing a bottle of champagne an hour or two earlier than usual, as Lord Monthermer in exchanging boots for shoes in time to do them honour. Every five minutes during dinner, her grace

reminded them that they had no time to lose; and when the ice was placed on table, the servants announced that the carriage was at the door while the coachman's wig became perceptible over the dwarf blinds of the dining-room.

Still, a glass or two of claret must be despatched; and though when the duchess and Miss De Ligne disappeared to take their coffee and array themselves in their shawls, the former announced that in five minutes she should summon Lord Monthermer to attend her, twenty elapsed before she had done scolding Mary and her waiting maid,—collected her opera glass and salts bottle,—taken leave of her lap-dog, and proceeded to the carriage. It was already seven o'clock when they quitted home; and, thanks to the tortuous and encumbered nature of the streets intervening between Portman-square and Drury-lane, the second act

of the new piece had begun ere the duchess entered her box.

"The house is quite full," observed Lord Monthermer, looking round at the close of the act. "I am glad to find that the great theatres are still in fashion."

"In *fashion?*" exclaimed the Duchess of Kimbolton. "Oh! *dear* no. Even with this excellent private box, I can rarely persuade any one to accompany me; and the public boxes are invariably empty."

"They appear to be overflowing to-night," said Lord Monthermer.

"So you will usually find them on the representation of a new piece; for nearly nine hundred persons have the right of free admittance into Drury Lane, and of course use their privilege without scruple whenever the performances are sufficiently interesting to fill the house. On such nights, too, all the dramatic critics make

it a point to attend; and one reads next day in the public journals the most luminous and energetic criticisms, which tend to persuade our country cousins that the drama is enthusiastically supported, and appreciated by the public with a degree of tact and sagacity altogether amazing!—Come on the *second* night of a new piece, and the nine hundred gratuitous spectators having disappeared, and the newspaper critics conveyed themselves elsewhere, you will find nothing but empty benches in the boxes, and empty heads in the *pit*.—Nothing can be more limited, in fact, than the number of amateurs of the drama, in London; they would barely suffice to support a single theatre; and we shall shortly have a playhouse in every street!"

However eager to escape the double martyrdom of the duchess's harangue and a sentimental play as doleful as the Book of Lamentations,

Lord Monthermer found himself compelled to stay it out, in order to escort his fair companions to their carriage. *Il prit donc* (according to the French proverb) *son plaisir en patience*, and did his utmost to enliven the dulness of the party; more particularly after the warning spectacle afforded in an opposite private box by Lord Loxley, vainly trying to keep himself awake by the aid of his snuff-box; and the Duchess of Havering, whom he was there to entertain, enjoying in her arm-chair a comfortable doze. Both had been taken in to give the support of their fashionable presence to the new play, by Count Flaszaski's assurance that the performances of the evening were to begin with an opera and conclude with a ballet; but how to resist the effects of the dose of morphine they were swallowing?—In another box, were Lord Carpynter and Kerr,—also intent upon upholding the new play, and proving their good

will towards the author by talking politics with their backs turned to the audience, in tones calculated to render their differences of opinion a matter of as much interest to the house as to the other house in which they were accustomed to hold forth; such being the support accorded by the higher classes in England to the legitimate drama!

"Will you come home and sup with the duchess?" inquired Lord Loxley, touching Monthermer's arm, as he was bowing his good night to the departing carriage of Miss De Ligne's majestic chaperon; and even weary as he was of himself, and the seven hours of mortal dulness he had been supporting,—the prospect of a more intimate acquaintance with Lord Colebrooke's sister was not to be overlooked. Monthermer was glad to find himself welcomed by the Duchess of Havering, who appeared to be refreshed into more than her usual vivacity

by the long nap she had been enjoying,—to a glittering, care-defying house, the very reverse of the temple of solemnity from whence he had escaped. A single glance round the brilliant drawing-rooms sufficed to prove that Lady Adelaide's noble relative was a woman of the world —a woman of the day.

A widow, as far as woman is widowed by the social death of a husband buried alive in the vast vault of public business, the Duchess of Havering, still handsome, and at all times lively and clever, preserved even at the perilous age of two-and-forty an unblemished reputation. *She* called it a perilous age. *She* was sometimes heard to assert with sportive irony, that the *youthful* beauty consults her own interests by appearing "*severe* in youthful beauty"; but that the woman of a certain age must relax to charm.

"Loved by her husband, admired by her

acquaintance, worshipped by the multitude, a pretty young woman has no leisure for coquetry;" —was the duchess's line of argument.—" *Her* vanity must be indeed rapacious, if she cannot content herself with the homage she receives. The real danger lies in that equivocal period when the husband, the friends, the multitude, direct their admiring gaze elsewhere; and amid the mortification arising from her discovery of the first gray hair, the wasting of the cheek and expansion of the waist, the woman of a certain age blushes for the first time to hear herself admired, and thrills with gratitude towards the hero who is still obliging enough to fancy her neither old nor ugly!"

Yet even the risks thus playfully described, the Duchess of Havering had escaped. Downing Street and Palace Yard denied her the society of her husband, and she consoled herself *faute de mieux* with whist.—She was not

a gambler. She played as a pass-time not as a *kill*-time; and her grace's society being chiefly composed of whist-players, for the most part sagacious able men, the Havering coterie was far from contemptible.

While they were eating their sandwiches, several men of Lord Monthermer's acquaintance dropped in, and a table was quickly formed. But before they sat down, the Duchess of Havering drew her new visitor aside.

"I want you," said she, "to give me an authentic version of a story which Lord Loxley was telling me this evening, and which he heard, I believe, from that person,—that Count Flaszaski,—with whom you all associate at your clubs. My niece, Adelaide, he says, or rather they say,—for it appears to be a mere *on dit*,—has been on the point of marriage with a near relative of yours—nephew—cousin—no matter—a man of family and fortune, who has suddenly broken off the match?"

"Mr. Wroughton, I conclude?" frankly demanded Lord Monthermer.

"Rawdon, I thought,—yes, yes, Wroughton must be the name."

"I have the satisfaction, then, of replying," said Monthermer, "that previous to my departure from Naples, Lady Adelaide herself assured me she had never entertained the slightest intention of giving her hand to my brother-in-law."

"And to whom, then, *does* she intend to give it?" cried the duchess, almost with indignation. "This Mr. Wroughton appears to have been a most unexceptionable match, and, according to report, attached to her for the last two years. Surely she does not intend to throw herself away on that ruined *roué*, Portumna?"

"Except as regards my brother, I have not the honour of being in her ladyship's confi-

dence," replied Monthermer, with an embarrassed smile.

"She was foolish enough to encourage him to dangle after her," continued the duchess, apparently thinking aloud; "but I am convinced it was only to torment your prodigious friend, the Duchess of Kimbolton; who, being devoted to the arts and antiquity and all that sort of thing, dotes upon Portumna, as one of the finest ruins of the times, and an inimitable specimen of rejuvenescence."

"I cannot presume to call myself the *friend* of the Duchess of Kimbolton; I am merely—"

"Never mind what you call yourself. I saw you to-night in her box, which you must have been a friend, or a bold man, to enter. But, to return to my niece"—

"Lady Adelaide will be in town in May; and—"

"So soon?—*tant mieux*—for I am impatient

to lecture her. Having no daughter, and *she* no mother, I have always treated her as a child of my own. It was I who wanted to make up that match for her with your cousin, Lord Bridgnorth, which, at one time, was all but settled. But they are calling me to order! My whist-table waits; and here, *en attendant*, (George, I want you!) allow me to present you to the Duke of Havering."

And the duke, who had just entered the room on his return from Windsor, bestowed ten minutes' attention upon the new peer, ere he quitted the house again to pass the remainder of the night in the house of Drawbacks.

CHAPTER VII.

Leon. Who *is* this gallant?
Fab. Scarce worth asking, sir.
A gilded toy,—a cunning parasite,
Yet *having* parasites that ape his vices.
BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

"I AM gratified to find," said Lord Carpynter to Monthermer, approaching him the following morning as he was turning over the papers at the Travellers', "that the eloquence of my friend, St. Leger Kerr, has been so effective. He tells me we have your promise for the Poor Law question and the Canada business.

Not but that I felt pre-assured of your concurrence in our views."

Lord Monthermer coloured deeply; not at finding himself praised by a man of Lord Carpynter's weight and judgment; but at the remembrance of the flighty, frivolous manner in which he had been beguiled into giving his vote, while his opinions were still so unsettled. It was, perhaps, because he felt nettled against himself, that he found resolution for a blunt reply to Lord Royston, who now sauntered towards them, always ready to interrupt with his inane rattle the discourse of more reasonable people.

"How are you, Monthermer?—Well, what have you decided about Easter—eh?"

"To stay where I am."

"*Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien,*" said Lord Carpynter.

"I am thinking of running over to Paris," observed Royston, moved, on the spur of the moment, by the associations evoked by the French proverb. "But Wexford assured me yesterday at dinner, that last Easter he was almost starved to death there. Not a cucumber or a new potato to eat with his salmon!—By the way, Monthermer, why didn't you sup at Flaszaski's last night?"

"I had another engagement, and was not invited."

"Flaszaski bade me ask you, and I forgot it. I am going to take him this morning to call on Harford."

"On Harford?—What possible attraction can he offer to such a man as Flaszaski?"

"Mr. Harford has an uncle," observed Lord Carpynter, drily.

"Has he?—I know very little about him."

"That little would have been nothing, but for his uncle. Harford is nephew to Sir Jacob Harford."

"A great banker, if I recollect?"

"*The* great banker, as you *ought* to recollect. Sir Jacob Harford is one of the master spirits of the times!"

"A man of considerable ability?"—

"The ability fabled in the philosopher's stone: Sir Jacob has the art of making gold. Your great genius of the present century does not throw away his talents in manufacturing brazen heads to utter truisms which, when spoken, no one cares to hear. Nowadays, great men make peace and war,—control the elements, by building steam-vessels, or taking shares in a new mine. A contract for a loan is greater in *their* hands than a cabalistic scroll of Friar Bacon!"

"Sir Jacob Harford, then, is one of these modern philosophers?"

"The head of the sect. He is really a wonderful man."

"The reverse, then, of his nephew; who is one of the most ordinary individuals of my acquaintance."

"A stupid ass, I must admit!" said Royston, chiming in. "Just fit for a junior attaché."

"Even in *that* Sir Jacob shows his judgment," observed Lord Carpynter. "This lad's father (his own younger brother) was a shrewd, intelligent man, Sir Jacob's friend and confidant, as well as heir. But when, at the father's death, the cunning old banker found himself encumbered with a blockhead in his successor, he would not hear of bringing up the boy to business; but sent him to Eton, and had him booked for a diplomat."

"Sir Jacob Harford has interest, then, with government?"

"Interest?—Why, he could buy up a South American republic, anoint himself king, and treat, *en souverain*, with the Foreign-office! Sir Jacob Harford commands any thing, of any body, that he chooses to ask for."

"Ay, ay?—I don't wonder, then," cried Lord Royston, "that Flaszaski has marked down the nephew for an intimate friend. I fancy poor Flash has been swimming out of his depth this long time past."

"I fancied Count Flaszaski was a man of family and fortune," said the naïf Monthermer.

"A man of tolerable connexions; but, from the times of the Chevalier de Grammont to our own, England has been the willing dupe of *les aventuriers de bonne maison*. John Bull is a lazy dog; he loves to be amused by his foreign guests; he loves to be taught to dress, eat his

dinner, and behave himself, by any gay and graceful foreigner, more particularly when gifted like Flaszaski, with mastery over his own temper and the frailties of other people."

"Ay! Flaszaski has them all hollow," cried Royston, stretching himself and yawning. "Artists, men of letters, men of fashion, press, populace,—high, low, great, and small. Flash swears he has every editor in town in his pay, or in fear of his horsewhip. He has thrown dust or snuff in their eyes. A man who can ride, who is a crack shot, and a *gastrophile*, may do what he likes in England."

"Not altogether!" said Lord Carpynter, without raising his eyes from a new periodical. "Flaszaski has not yet found his way into good *female* society. Our ladies show their good taste: they admit him to be very handsome,—very talented,—very showy;—but he is Count Flaszaski,—he is not a safe man."

"A deuced agreeable one though!" interrupted Royston; "and when a man whose father is not worth a shilling and was *never* worth a guinea, contrives to spend ten thousand a year without embarrassing himself—"

"He is not likely to be courted as an acquaintance by a Sir Jacob Harford!" said Carpynter. "The old banker is not a man of fashion or a man of genius; it would be difficult to throw dust in *his* eyes, unless it were gold dust."

"Hush!—he is here!"—interrupted Royston; and looking round, Lord Monthermer perceived that Flaszaski was standing near them in one of his choicest attitudes. The same glance induced him to congratulate himself on the resolution to remain in town which Royston's importunities had forced from his lips; for every man worth knowing was in the room.

Inexperienced in the routine of London life, he forgot that the adjournment of the houses that night would set all the world at liberty on the morrow; and that all the world at liberty, would send for its post-horses and take its departure. But his mind became enlightened when, on the fatal Thursday, he discerned from his drawing-room in Grosvenor Square (to a daily inspection of the progress of which he was fairly drilled by the officiousness of Gossage) that the shutters of every neighbouring mansion were closed. He left his name for the Duchess of Kimbolton,—"Gone!"—for the Duchess of Havering,—"Left town."—Lord Carpynter kissed his hand to him in Piccadilly from a travelling carriage, and Lord Loxley passed him at Hyde Park corner, in a phaeton with posters. Even little Harford had been picked up like a crumb by his uncle the banker, and carried off to Omnium Lodge, Chigwell, for the holidays.

Lord Monthermer had not conceived it possible that four-and-twenty hours could create such a vacuum in the busy metropolis. The following morning at breakfast, he was beginning to feel, in spite of his anxiety to be on the spot for letters, vaguely conscious of the necessity of a journey into Northamptonshire, when his cares were relieved by a letter from Gerald Wroughton.

Twice did Lord Monthermer pause, ere he broke open the seal. That he was about to receive ample confirmation of Harford's report of a rupture between Lady Adelaide and his brother-in-law, he could not doubt; and dearly as his own happiness was involved in the intelligence, it was impossible to withhold his sympathy from the distress of Gerald. He dreaded to encounter the expression of grief so poignant as must have overwhelmed the sensi-

tive and devoted heart of the brother of Marcella!

What therefore was his surprise, on perusing the following communication!

"You accuse me of want of candour towards you, with regard to my prospects, my dear Helmsley (excuse me,—but so from long habit I still accustom myself to call you); and make no allowance for wounded self-love, to the instigations of which I suspect even the wisest of human creatures is accessible. But to be wise, is by no means my pretension: and I will not hesitate to own that mortification alone has produced the silence with which you so bitterly reproach me.

"I *did* imagine, as I avowed to you before you quitted Naples, that I was not altogether an object of indifference to one whose only discommendation in my eyes was the harsh opi-

nion you had so unjustly formed of her. But not to weary you with details of my blindness *then* or enlightenment *now*, suffice it that I have proved to be as great a coxcomb as my neighbours. I deceived myself, my dear Helmsley! Lady Adelaide de Vere never cared a rush for me; and I fancy I can hear you at this moment, congratulating me on my escape!

"*Escape* is not the word *I* can permit myself to apply to this unexpected repulse; but the frailty of human nature considered, I have borne my mortification with wonderful *sang froid*. I eat, drink, sleep, and am merry; and though I have so far ceded to the influence of disappointment as to postpone for a time my return to England, it is rather from the apprehension of being crowed over by your noble lordship, than of encountering Lady Adelaide or her family. Instead of finishing the spring with you in town, therefore, or at Wroughton

with Emma, I am off for Greece; and it shall go hard but I will pick up a kinder Helen upon Trojan ground. My friend Lord George gives me a passage to the islands in his frigate; whence I shall make what speed I may to Constantinople. I am in high spirits at the prospect of the excursion; and shall return to you, late in the autumn, as classical as poor St. Paul, and as brown as a berry of well-roasted Mocha. Meanwhile *Vale et me ama* though Lady Adelaide would *not;* and for the last time from Naples, believe me to be your affectionate brother,

G. W."

Lord Monthermer had perused and reperused this cheering letter with still increasing wonder and satisfaction, before he espied a few words of postscript close to the seal, which after minute investigation conveyed to him the welcome intelligence that within a few days, the Cole-

brooke party might be expected in England!—His first impulse had been to enclose the letter at once to the family at Wroughton Hall. But he *now* felt that a decisive moment was arrived; and that it would be impossible to write to Emma without entering into the full particulars of an invitation to London. It was some consolation to reflect, as he sat down to fulfil his intention, that Gerald's change of intentions would be likely to produce a corresponding alteration in the wishes and projects of his family; and in informing Miss Wroughton and her aunt that his house would be ready for their reception in the course of a week, he could not refrain from a secret hope that they might adhere to their often avowed preference of the country. The children would do extremely well under the care of their nurse and nursery governess, in Grosvenor Square, without taxing the exertions of poor old Mrs.

Margaret and her niece, for a superfluous journey.

These feelings were, perhaps, inadvertently betrayed in the tenour of his invitation; for after the first enthusiasm of his joy for Gerald's release, Emma observed with a smile to Mrs. Wroughton,—" It is something, at least, that Monthermer has not yet learned to play the hypocrite. He does not want us in London, you see. In spite of all his efforts his disinclition peeps out."

" Pho, pho!—you are full of strange fancies!" mumbled the old lady, not choosing to sanction an opinion which was secretly her own, " However, I am glad you have taken this whimsy into your head; for had you fancied Lord Monthermer wished for us, my dear, you might have desired to accept the invitation; and sorely against the grain, I should have acquiesced. As it is, a civil ' No thankye' will

do for both of us; and my rheumatism is secure of a quiet spring in the country."

"But the children,—the dear children! I have long made up my mind that the Honourable Mary and Henry Delaval would never be to me what Maysey and Harry Helmsley have been. Still, it will seem like parting anew from Marcella, to give them up to their father!"

"Give them up?—Nonsense! If Lord Monthermer is not anxious for our company, depend upon it he has no wish to be troubled with the children.—Mary De Ligne writes word to her father that your brother-in-law is quite the fashion. Men of fashion do not want to be encumbered with a school-room or a nursery."

"But he *ought* to be encumbered!" cried Emma, with indignation. "Fashion, indeed!—at *his* age!"

"Lord Monthermer is only nine-and-twenty, my dear, and a very personable man."

"To *me* he appears old," resumed Emma, with a deep sigh, "because having seen Marcella's life devoted to him, I seem to feel that *his* earthly career ought to have ended with her own. Yet *his* is, in fact, beginning. He will live to forget her—nay, I dare say he has already completely forgotten her.—Oh! Aunt Margaret!—What a lesson to the selfish aspirings of a woman's heart!"—

"Do not judge the whole sex by your brother-in-law. I always told you that Sir William Helmsley was a weak, inconsistent man; fortified in the first place by a good education, and in the second, by a good wife.

Unstable as water, he shall not excel!

His character wants stamina!"

"And *I* want patience with it."

"Come, come!—bear and forbear—judge not that ye be not judged. And above all, sit down and prove to him by the best arguments you can instil, that the children are too young to be benefited by London in point of education, and too young not to be injured by it in point of health. Bid him leave them with us till summer, when we will surrender them into his own hands at Bridgnorth Castle."

"And very likely into the hands of a mother-in-law!" added Emma, sorrowfully taking up her pen.—"Now we are relieved from all fear of Gerald's marriage, the next thing we have to apprehend is some similar folly on the part of the Right Honourable Lord Monthermer!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Admire the rich tapestry gracing the room!
How exquisite!—Sure it was wrought in the loom
Of the gods! And how striking—how bold the designs;
No pencil e'er drew such elaborate lines.
Minerva!—they rise above critical strictures;
And what animation enlightens the pictures!

THEOCRITUS.

MESSRS. Maple and Co. were too well versed in the inconsistencies of the great world in general, and Mr. Gossage too well schooled by the caprices of the late Lord Bridgnorth in particular, to experience the slightest surprise at the interest now suddenly evinced by Lord

Monthermer in the completion of his house. Hitherto, he had left to others the choice of candelabra and distribution of ottomans; but, inspired by a paroxysm of *virtù*, he now passed several hours a day in surveillance of the finishing touches which were distributing on all sides. Though he had submitted to the conspiracy of the steward and upholsterers chiefly to obtain a pretext for delaying his domicilation, he was growing as anxious to settle in Grosvenor Square, as he had hitherto been to vagabondize in hotels and clubhouses.

Messrs. Maple, indeed, familiar with the varied symptoms of fashionable folly, attributed all to Easter. "When great folks *will* remain in town, when town isn't fit to be stayed in," argued they, "what is to be expected but that, feeling bored, they should make themselves troublesome to their tradespeople!" And at every fresh entreaty for despatch issued by

Lord Monthermer, they muttered among themselves,—" Why can't the man go down, as a nobleman ought, to his country seat for the holidays; and leave us to get through our business in comfort!"

In *dis*comfort, meanwhile, the business was got through, according to their contract, before the completion of the holidays; and Lord Monthermer, in taking possession, had no negative to oppose to the protestations of Messrs. Maple, that " they flattered themselves his lordship might boast of having the most complete, tasteful, and unique, of all the complete and tasteful mansions of modern London!" Engrossed as he had latterly been by its progress, he had no leisure to hail its completion. A letter from Wroughton Hall, closely following upon that in which his hospitalities were declined, acquainted him that his boy, the heir of all his new-born grandeurs, had been attacked by serions indisposition.

To do Lord Monthermer justice, it was of his child and not his heir he thought, while hurrying down to Wroughton Hall. Throughout the journey, he accused himself, with bitter earnestness, of having too much estranged his thoughts from the sole pledges remaining to him of the happiness of his earlier years; and when, on reaching the Hall, he was welcomed with the intelligence that Master Delaval was better, and all danger past, he congratulated himself with a degree of fervour which half obliterated the unfavourable feelings springing up against him in the minds of Emma and Mrs. Margaret. Little Harry's disorder proved to be a mild scarlatina, exaggerated by the tender anxieties of his attached aunts.

Lord Monthermer was profoundly touched, however, by the devotedness of these two kind creatures to the son whom he accused himself of having neglected. They might be less ac-

complished, than Lady Adelaide de Vere,—less refined in their deportment than the Almack's beauties with whom he had lately been associating; but what a contrast between their warm and feminine tenderness and the heartless levity of his London companions!—Softened by his fears for the safety of the boy, Monthermer was for a moment recalled to the better purposes of life!

Even Wroughton Hall appeared improved since his last visit. The spring was now in all its flush of beauty. The old-fashioned hedges of sweetbriar had put forth their fragrance,—the orchards their blossoms. The woods were diversified by springing foliage of every variety of green; the park freshened into a noble uniformity of verdure by the thick-coming grass; the place seemed to have lost its oppressive monotony of gloom.

But to Wroughton Hall he wished his fit of

rural enthusiasm to be limited. Even when the child was sufficiently recovered to accompany him in a daily airing, he experienced no inclination for a visit to the Abbey, or an excursion to Bridgnorth Castle; and Emma's sagacity readily discerned that London was henceforward his mark. With a tremulous voice, she hazarded the expression of a hope that her nephew's illness would produce no change in his plans for the children.

"You have promised them to us," said she, "for this one spring. I feel that it will be the last; and that you have every right to claim them from me;—but till the summer—"

"Do not urge it, my dear Emma," interrupted Lord Monthermer. "My feelings of self-reproach, on receiving the tidings of that poor boy's danger, convince me that the only proper abode for a child, is the roof of its surviving parent."

"Surely not, when the child is delicate, and the residence of the parent in smoky, stifling London?—Would Harry have recovered his scarlatina so quickly, think you, in Grosvenor Square?—No—no!—We have proved to you that we are excellent nurses;—leave us these two dear creatures for a few months more."

Lord Monthermer looked grave, and shook his head.

"Leave them to me," persisted Emma, the tears streaming from her cheeks,—"Leave them to me, I beseech,—I entreat you!—*You* have every thing the world can afford. *You* are surrounded by duties, pleasures, allurements. *I* have nothing but those children to remind me that I was once happy in the tenderness of a sister."

Deeply moved by this appeal, Lord Monthermer pressed her hands in silence; and she felt that her petition was granted.

"You must bring them to me at the Castle, then, in August," said he, at length, "according to our original agreement. Meanwhile, dear Emma, let me hear daily of their welfare, as the beings who are still dearest to me on earth."

Though grateful for the concession, Miss Wroughton could not forbear silently noting that, as their original agreement had stood for midsummer, her vacillating brother-in-law must have already prospectively prolonged his stay in town from June till August,—the greatest possible stretch of the fashionable season; nor could Mrs. Margaret Wroughton help suspecting, as she watched his lordship's travelling-carriage rolling once more along the London-ward level of the park, that, in assigning to Marcella's children the highest place in his affections, he deceived himself and the truth was not in him. Even when bestowing his

parting caresses on Mary and her brother, he had betrayed uncontrollable elation of spirit at the prospect of his return to London.

How, in fact, could it be otherwise?—He was hastening to the enjoyment of all those means of happiness which wealth, rank, youth, and health place at the disposal of the more favoured race of mortals. It was spring. The earth was bright around him, the heavens radiant and auspicious over his head, as he re-entered that mart of all that is great and glorious in legislation and civilization,—the metropolis of the most prosperous country in the world!

Of all moments, indeed, to form a favourable opinion of London, the week succeeding a late Easter is the time. Parliamentary business as well as the graver business of pleasure is about to begin in earnest; and public hopes and private expectations come fluttering forth to the field. All the world is looking forward;—every thing is fresh, every thing promising.

As the season advances, mortifications and disappointments arise;—the bright blush becomes pale, the white robe becomes yellow, the green squares and parks become brown, the sunshiny brows of expecting patriots become black!—Every body has been ill used by somebody, and nobody is altogether satisfied.

But in May,—that third bright week in May, which saw Lord Monthermer instal himself in his brilliant and luxurious mansion in Grosvenor Square, the world is still in good humour; the world has brought up a stock of health and animation from the country. The unwearied menials are assiduous, the untired horses sleek; not a scratch upon the coachman's resplendent panels,—not a frown upon my lady's unruffled countenance.

A splendid dinner was served within half an hour of Lord Monthermer's arrival; and though he sat down to table alone, there was such a

stir of whirling equipages in the streets and joyous voices in the air, that he felt less lonely than amid the blackbirds and thrushes of Wroughton Hall, with the silent Emma and the sober Mrs. Margaret for his companions.

After dinner, he called for the porter's book, and the cards and notes left during his absence from town; but his faint hope of finding the name of the Earl of Colebrooke, was disappointed. He had seen no announcement in the papers, indeed, of the arrival of the family in England. But in the hurry of leaving town, he had forgotten to desire his own newspapers to be forwarded after him; and the twaddling old-lady-like journal patronised by Mrs. Margaret, troubled itself little with the record of fashionable movements. Even in the papers of the day which now lay before him, the momentous article of "Arrivals" was superseded by a dozen columns of debate, which, at any other

time, would have done more than attract Lord Monthermer's attention to the majority gracing the division.

But though aware that his own party was enlisted in the ministerial struggle, he soon turned from the description of the parliamentary fight to the porter's book; glancing over the names of Havering, Kimbolton, Wexford, Carpynter, Loxley, and a long list of noble and ignoble visitors, of persons and personages, in whose society he was likely for the next three months to eat his *suprême de volaille*, talk over debates, debate over his rubbers, and saunter a daily stroll in the park.

There were invitations, too, from the fair sex, as well as visits from the foul. The Duchess of Havering was at home every Monday (as wife to his majesty's minister), and every Saturday after the opera (as Duchess of Havering); while the Duchess of Kimbolton

announced a ball, and Lord Carpynter invited him to a Saturday dinner. On the Wednesday, there was a levee; on the Thursday, a drawing-room. Lord Monthermer found that even the week before him was tolerably filled up.

Though tired with his journey, his first impulse after drinking his coffee (in pursuance of a singular instinct of English gentlemanly nature), was to proceed to his club, to "hear what was going on." But to his surprise, he scarcely found a man of his acquaintance to tell the tale. It was too late and too early; even Lord Loxley, who passed him in a hurry on the stairs had only time to say in answer to his "how are you,"—"I am going home to dress, I shall see you by and by at the Duchess of Havering's."

"And why not?"—was Monthermer's next cogitation. "I forgot that it was Monday. I may learn from the duchess some tidings of her brother."

Unfortunately as he was entering his cabriolet, that of Count Flaszaski drove up to the door.

"Ha! mein tear lord!—how long was you returned?"—cried the count with a vehement shake of the hand, such as foreigners love to bestow in token of their Anglicism. "We have miss you prodigious!—What hosts of people in town!—You was leaf the Clarendon, I find; where did you go now?"—

"I am in Grosvenor Square."

"Ah! so much de better! I shall be very glad to see you. Mein friend Lord Lynchwell (for whom I am build a carriage), live in Grosvenor Square; I visit him every day."

"I trust, then, you will find me out. *Sans adieu!* I am going home to dress for the Duchess of Havering's."

"The Duchess Evéring? *Gott in Himmel!* vat take you to dat woman!—It is Monday

squeeze, my dear fellow. You vas a mistake. Dere is no visth at de Duchess to-night, —no societies,—no noting!"

"I beg your pardon. Loxley has just told me that all London will be there. It is her first assembly for the season."

"All Lonton!—*Quelle horreur!*—You do not reflect vat you say!—Better get into my cab. We shall have a littel quiet hazard and a *petit souper*."

"Thank you! I never sup, and never play."

"*Animal!*"—muttered the count, picking up his glove. "Did you hear de news?"

"News?" reiterated Lord Monthermer.

"She is arrive;—slep dis morning at Dovor, and vill be in town to-morrow."

"*Indeed?*" cried Monthermer, wondering how the knowing count should have divined his thoughts to be intent upon the Dovor road.

"*Ma parole !*—in time for de *rebetition.*"

"What repetition ?"

"De rehearse."

"Rehearse ?"

"Of de new ballet,—mein tear fellow !"

"Of whom and what *are* you talking ?" cried Lord Monthermer, with sudden consciousness.

"Of whom and vot all London vas talk, dis night !" exclaimed the enthusiastic count. "Of de Elsler ! See, den !—I have in my pocket de dispatch vitch contain de annonce of her arrive."

But Lord Monthermer could not be persuaded to stay and listen to the recital of the momentous despatch. With a hasty adieu to Flaszaski, he made his way into his cabriolet and disappeared.

CHAPTER IX.

Mon style est si négligé, qu'il faut avoir un esprit naturel, et du monde, pour pouvoir s'y accommoder.

MADAME DE SEVIGNE.

IT was somewhat more than midnight when Lord Monthermer arrived at the official residence of the Haverings; and the crowd of carriages encumbering the street apprized him that the party was as crowded as ministerial halls are sure to be, whoever be the minister, or whatever his wife. Had he been in doubt as to the hour, the ghastly face of His Excellency Prince Wiggersnosky whom he en-

countered on the stairs, might have sufficed to announce that it was that witching time of night, beyond which his excellency's care for his excellency's health and beauty, never suffers the light of his countenance to shine upon the dissipations of the season.

Of the Duchess of Havering, meanwhile, Lord Monthermer had derived a sufficiently pleasing impression, to look forward with pleasure to the renewal of their acquaintance. He liked her frank reckless manners, and the well-bred freedom of her house; and felt that five minutes' conversation with her would put him in possession of all he wished to learn respecting Lady Adelaide.

Five minutes' conversation!—Yes! he actually fancied that the Duchess of Havering would find five minutes on one of her crowded Monday nights, to bestow upon an obscure Lord Monthermer;—a Lord Monthermer whose vote

had been already begged by ministers, for the two most critical questions of the session!

When he *did* contrive to make his way, however, through the crowd stopping up the doorway,—the crowd of blue, red, green, pale blue, and pale yellow ribbons,—of excellencies French, Spanish, Austrian, Prussian, Danish, Swedish, Russian, Persian, Madagascarian, and others,—a single glimpse of the grave and dignified (Monday night) Duchess of Havering, sufficed to produce a new appreciation of their respective position. The duchess was engaged in grave discourse with the Russian Ambassadress—who was treating as a *badinage* a matter *she* regarded as of serious moment; while her grace regarding it as a jest, treated it of course with becoming gravity and consideration. Near them, and occasionally edging in a word, stood the Austrian Ambassador; who, as he talked only of the new opera, was probably trying to

overhear the subject of their conversation; while a little further off, stood the Prussian Secretary of Legation, bowing occasionally to all parties, as if forming a part of their illustrious circle, but intent only upon discovering from the expression of countenance of each, the motives each might have to be satisfied with the other.

Beyond this eminent *partie quarrée* were groups of ladies hoping or wishing for an opportunity to extort something from the duchess more familiar than a formal bow, in order to excite the envy of ladies still more remote, by showing how familiarly they were treated. Lady Malmsley was dying to send home a dozen of her dear detestable friends, exclaiming, "Yes! Lord Malmsley will certainly get the poor marquis's garter;—I saw the duchess whisper to her, holding her by the little finger for nearly a quarter of an hour." While Lady Fitzflym-

flam trusted the report of Sir Robert's approaching elevation to the peerage would gain ground on the morrow,—her grace having graciously deigned to reply, "Better, I thank you," to her anxious inquiries after the Duke of Havering's influenza. Others maintained their ground with an air of magnanimous self-possession, as if asserting their right to a due share of attention from the duchess; more than one consequential dame bearing it written in her countenance—"*we* support ministers;—*we* vote for the duke;—*we* have a claim to be properly received! *Let* her grace neglect us if she dare."

Lord Monthermer, meanwhile, squeezed his patient way in,—without a star—without a garter,—without any thing but a tolerably handsome person to distinguish him from the throng. To the *corps diplomatique* he was "a blank, my lord!" His face was unfamiliar to

them. He was not of the court,—he was not of the cabinet,—he was nothing!—The Duke of Wexford, (who was listening with a degree of gravity equally argumentative of stolidity or wisdom, and as wide awake as could be expected after dinner to a prosy dissertation on Irish affairs, from what is called a rising member of the lower House, that is, a member who is always trying to get upon his legs,) nodded to Monthermer as he moved slowly on through the crowd; and amid the host of unfamiliar faces, it was actually a relief to hail the gigantic form of the Duchess of Kimbolton, stationed in a doorway, looking like Gargantua in a pink satin gown and silver turban.

"Is Miss De Ligne here to-night?" he inquired, after going through the routine of compliments due to one so punctilious as her grace.

"Miss De Ligne?—Oh! *dear* no!—I con-

sider young ladies extremely out of place in such assemblies. Ball-rooms, concerts, theatres, are their becoming sphere; I am a great rigorist on such points!"

"Shall I have the honour of meeting you at Lord Carpynter's at dinner on Saturday?"

"Dine with my brother at one of his parliamentary dinners? Oh! *dear* no!—Quite out of a woman's province in my opinion. I never dine at table when the Duke of Kimbolton has a political party. Mr. Monkton is always good enough to take my place. Besides, I must be at the opera early on Saturday. It is the new opera."

"I have no doubt it will be highly successful. At Naples it was considered Donizetti's *chef-d'œuvre*."

"Donizetti's *chef-d'œuvre?*—Oh! *dear* no!—It is the weakest thing he has ever produced. I heard the cavatina, the quartetto, and the finale

of the first act, the other night at Devonshire House.—Very poor, indeed!"

Lord Monthermer, thus unsuccessful in entertaining the Brobdignag duchess, whose chief pleasure lay in proving herself, by universal contradiction, the wisest of womankind, now made a move to pass on. To pass on?—"Oh! *dear* no!"—The Duchess of Kimbolton, expressing a desire to join her friend, Lady Clementina in the other room, immediately fastened herself upon his arm.

He was inexpressibly provoked;—*mais que faire?*—No one would suspect him of having offered himself as the cavalier of a woman who was neither young, pretty, nor agreeable; and he had, therefore, the vexation of feeling himself paraded as a victim. There was a peculiar expression in the smile with which Lord Royston nodded to him across the room, which caused his cheeks to tingle; and in diverting

his eyes, with sudden impetuosity from the sneering countenance of his friend, they fell upon the outline of a female form, upon a waist and an ivory shoulder, which excited a strange commotion in his feelings. What symmetry,—what grace!—But one such figure had ever fascinated his enraptured gaze!—Could it be Lady Adelaide herself?—Was she returned?—Was she in London?—Was he, indeed, in her presence?—

About fifteen persons intervened between him and the mysterious lady, who was moving onwards before him. She did not turn her head; she was on the arm of a man with whom he was unacquainted. He had no chance of obtaining a glimpse of her countenance! Unconscious that the Duchess of Kimbolton was favouring him with her opinion upon the state of affairs in Spain, and forgetful of the scorn he had formerly heard her heap

upon the Colebrooke family, he suddenly interrupted her with—

"Pray is Lord Colebrooke here to-night?"—

"I really cannot inform you."

"I cannot help fancying that the lady before us is Lady Adelaide de Vere?"—

"Oh! *dear*, no! I have not the honour of knowing Lady Adelaide de Vere; but the lady before us is Mrs. Smallbalance, the wife of the chairman of—"

"I mean a tall woman in white satin, now passing through the doorway?"

"Oh! *dear*, no! That is Lady Macwhachlan of Lochwhachlan."

"Lord Portumna!" exclaimed Monthermer, suddenly laying his hand on the sleeve of a man who was trying to slide past the duchess, unobserved. "I am delighted to see you! How long have you been arrived?—Where are

you in town ?—Are Lord Colebrooke and Lady Adelaide here ?"—

"Lady Adelaide is just gone into the other room; I am at Fenton's !" cried Portumna, pushing on, and wondering how even a Monthermer could be so ignorant of the *on dits* of the world, as to arrest him, if not face to face, at least side to side, with that which is worse than an actual creditor,—a former love ;—while the duchess raised herself a foot above the level of the crowd, and looked loftily indignant. Still, when Portumna had passed on, she did not relinquish the arm to which she had attached herself.

"I do not perceive Lady Clementina," faltered Monthermer.

"Nor I—Ah ! there are two chairs vacant near the window. Thank Heavens !—I have been standing all the evening, and am tired to death."

And leisurely seating herself the Duchess of Kimbolton resumed her exposition of Spanish affairs. There she sat, and there she prosed; till, by the mercy of Providence, some officious dowager passing by, warned her of a draught from the window; and Lord Monthermer was immediately requested to escort her down stairs and ask for her carriage.

The first sound that greeted him in the hall was an announcement that "*Lady de Vere's* carriage stopped the way;" and in a moment, the idol of his soul, closely shawled and leaning on Lord Portumna's arm, passed him so closely that nothing but the leaden weight of the duchess of Kimbolton, by which he was borne down and pinned to the spot, could have prevented him from following them.

"*My* carriage is next, I fancy!" said the duchess to her dumb companion, whose eyes were fixed upon the red baize doors through

which Lady Adelaide had vanished. "Lord Monthermer, *may* I trouble you to ask for my shawl.—What a wretched party!—I hope the duchess will do better next Monday.—I don't know when I have passed a more stupid evening.—Ah! here are my people!—Good night! I shall see you to-morrrow at the Opera!"—

CHAPTER X.

Thou dost accuse
Thy state too harshly; it may give some room,
Some little room, amid its radiant cares,
For love and joy to breathe in.

ION.

EVEN kings in their majesty experience a drawback upon their regal enjoyments, in the importunities of state; and noble lords with extensive rentrolls, are of course exposed at an humble distance, to similar contrarieties. On the Tuesday morning, poor Monthermer would fain have issued forth to beat the gera-

nium bushes of all the fashionable hotels of the West End; for the Court Guide answered not to the name of "Colebrooke:" and Lord Monthermer knew that if the earl resided in a private house, it must be in one hired for the season.

But that luckless morning had been expressly appointed, in a letter indited by himself from Wroughton Hall, for an interview with his solicitors;—who arrived in Grosvenor Square determined that their six shillings and eightpenny conference should be enlarged not only into thirteen and fourpence, but one pound one or two pounds two; and took care to detain the Earl from eleven o'clock till two, listening to what he did not want to hear, and being consulted on subjects upon which he had no opinion to offer.

On the departure of Messrs. Cognovit and Co., who left behind them in the lordly study

a reminiscence of unsavoury blacking, it was announced that "a person from Messrs. Maple" was in waiting,—then "a person from Messrs. Emanuel,"—then, half a dozen "persons" connected with the department of the toilet or the table.—It was in short half-past three o'clock before Lord Monthermer, though master of fifty thousand per annum, found himself master of his own time, or was able to mount his horse for the day.

His first visit was to Fenton's.

"Was Lord Portumna at home?"

"Lord Portumna was *not* at home."

"Was Lord Colebrooke's family staying in the house?"

"John Wright! Be my Lord Colebrooke's family staying in the house?—No, sir—my Lord Colebrooke's family is *not* staying in the house."

"Call Lord Portumna's valet."

"John Wright!—Be my Lord Portumna's valet any ways that way?—Sir, my Lord Portumna's people is *out* of the way."

While he was inveighing against the lucklessness of his stars at the penthouse point of St. James's Street so unpropitious to the musings of man or beast, or man on beast,—he was accosted by Lord Loxley.

"Pray take a turn with me down to the house," said he. "I want to talk to you about that bay filly. John Robinson, my head training-groom has heard some foolish reports, which would make a man less cool than myself, uneasy."

It was in vain that Monthermer assured him he was ready to take back the bay filly—afford any information—submit to any arbitration—give any trial—that he cared in short as little as he knew, concerning the matter. Loxley insisted upon entering into particulars; insisted

upon placing the affair in the clearest light. They were accountable to the sporting world,—to the Jockey Club,—to the newspapers,—and to posterity; and as he recapitulated and re-recapitulated the sayings and doings of Tattersall's, and the doings and sayings of Newmarket, Lord Monthermer fairly wished the bay filly at the Old Harry, with Loxley or John Robinson on its back.

"Can you inform me the direction of Lord Colebrooke?" said he, at length,—after having even exceeded all the promises required by his punctilious sporting friend.

"Colebrooke?—I did not know he was in England. But come on with me, and you will find out at the House of Lords."

Before, however, they had reached so near the house as half way down Whitehall, Loxley recollected that there had been a ballot at

Brookes's of which he was eager to learn the result. "A thousand pardons, my dear Lord Monthermer," cried he, "but you will ascertain what you want to know just as well at Brookes's as at the house. If Colebrooke is really in town, ten to one we shall find him at Brookes's."

And towards Brookes's, Monthermer returned. But no Colebrooke was there. No Colebrooke had been heard of. Instead of the very stones prating of his whereabout, those stocks, the house porter and head waiter, had nothing to reply to his inquiries but that "My Lud Colebrooke was at Naples."

Wishing *them* at Hanover, in return, poor Monthermer was forced to depart; and as it was now half-past five, and the horses and carriages of all self-respecting individuals were by this time turned towards the park, he threw

himself upon the chance of meeting the object of his inquiry on the spot where most of the evil-doing multitude are to be met with at that hour.

But though his fashionable acquaintance in London was now wonderfully augmented, besides being increased by the heavy brigade of all his Northamptonshire neighbours, Lord Monthermer was still apt to feel bewildered when thrust into such heterogeneous throngs as that into which he now proceeded to coax the uncivilized nature of the beautiful animal on which he was mounted; for though thoroughbred, Reindeer, the pride of the late Lord Bridgnorth's stud, had not been trained to the task of doing gentle duty in the park, which so greatly resembles that of ambling in my lady's chamber. The string of gay equipages with their gayer inmates, grinding their slow way

between ranks of admiring dandies—dandies who smiled in order to be admired in return;—the carriage of Lady —— lined with pale yellow silk to set off her brunette complexion;—the chariot of the slender Mrs. D—— lined with dark chocolate to throw her slight figure into relief;—and the *vis-à-vis* of the ghastly viscountess, flaming with crimson blinds, to cast a reflection on her pallid countenance—all these he passed and persuaded Reindeer to pass, unnoticed;—for he knew that Lady Adelaide was not the vulgar-minded woman to take pleasure in staring at other people's faces, or having her own stared at, through the windows of a carriage proceeding through a mob at the rate of a quarter of a mile in three-quarters of an hour;—and that, if in want of air and exercise, she would be found among the equestrians at another part of the park. But if

unaccompanied by his daughter, Lord Colebrooke was the very man to adhere to the ring, which had witnessed his airings for the last forty years; and Monthermer accordingly directed his scrutinizing glances towards every knot of males followed by a little groom strapped to a great coat, or boasting among its round backs and pigtails, a military-looking middle-aged gentleman.

But from the prosiest to the pertest of those who were discussing the debate the preceding night, with a degree of earnestness singularly out of place considering their lukewarm inertness in the genuine field of political action,—not a sign of the Earl of Colebrooke!—Never had Monthermer beheld so few pigtails,—so few round shoulders. London seemed to have grown young, in order to torment him.—Even old Moseley was sporting that morning a bottle-

green coat with a rosebud in the button-hole, in hopes of dropping thirty out of forty years which have dug their crow's feet into his puckered visage, since his debut upon the London pavé; while poor old Lord R——, bidding defiance to the records of the Peerage, kept harassing a high-spirited horse, to display the vigour of his arm and the elasticity of his seat. There was not a soul to be seen in Hyde Park, a day more than five-and-twenty years of age!

Old people of the world do well to mistrust themselves on such points. It is amazing how hard-featured the human species may be rendered by a career of vice and hypocrisy.—Late hours, high living, a malicious temper fretting under the disappointment of its ambitions, an uneasy conscience, or uneasy digestion,—wither the complexion and affix a baleful expression

upon the countenance; and beauties grown unwieldy and dandies grown gray, are among the most miserable specimens afforded by the fashionable world.

Revolving these truisms in his mind, Lord Monthermer sauntered on; and turning at length from the confusion at Cumberland gate, (the only point of the park at which even the best tempered coachman is permitted occasionally to swear, and the best bred standard footman to quit his perpendicular, in order to look round and ascertain whose pole is breaking his leg, or whose restive horse backing into his lady's lap)—he diverged towards Kensington Gardens; and amid the groups before him, soon discerned one which induced him to quicken his pace.—

But, alas! the elderly gentleman convoying the party, whose remote aspect had induced

him to run down an unoffending water-cart, was none other than the Duke of Kimbolton; and Lord Monthermer found it impossible to resist the expressive looks of Miss De Ligne, whom his grace was escorting, as she glanced towards the wise men of Gotham with whom he was pottering along. Checking his horse to Mary's side, Monthermer forgot his impatience for a moment in compassion to the disconsolate little damsel thus inappropriately accompanied.

"You were not at the Duchess of Havering's last night?" said he, by way of entering into conversation.

"No. I had no particular wish to go. You don't know how dull I find those sort of parties, and we have *so* many of them!"

"But you must surely greatly enjoy your season in town?"—he demanded, secure of not

being overheard by the duke, who was discussing with his two brother elders some political question of the last century.

"Do I?" said Mary, turning her blue eyes upon him with a smile; little imagining the contempt entertained by Lord Monthermer for the lares and penates of his neighbour the squire, so dear to herself as "home."—"If you did but know how weary I am of it all! The easy life I led in Northamptonshire had not prepared me for the formal, cold, pompous sort of routine I go through in London. The Duchess of Kimbolton is my godmother, and means to be very kind (don't be afraid, the duke never considers a word I utter worth listening to!) But she thinks so much of what is proper for young ladies to do, and proper for young ladies to say, and proper for young ladies to look, that young ladies might as well be

locked up in a suit of armour, as live and breathe in her presence. I don't think mamma would ever have permitted me to do any thing indecorous; yet every thing to which I am accustomed, the duchess pronounces to be radically wrong. If you could but imagine how I long sometimes, after being well lectured, to find myself, at kind, loving, happy High Grove!"

"But the fêtes of London?"—

"I am scarcely permitted to enjoy them. I am acquainted with very few young people. The duchess entertains an opinion that nothing is more injudicious than intimacies among girls; she always chooses me for partners what she calls 'safe men;' and the only people who frequent her house, are tiresome, managing, peevish women of a certain age, with beaux to match; who look contemptuously in my face and consider me sadly in the way. I assure

you I find London the dullest place in the world."

"You want, in short, to be at High Grove again. I passed the gates the other day on my way to town; and the lodge was looking as bright as a full blown Corcorus could make it."

"Ah! poor dear Jesse Martin's favourite Corcorus. My brother George and I helped to train it for him. And you have really been down into Northamptonshire, while we were at Chertsey, I suppose?—And Emma! is Emma coming to town?"

"No, Miss Wroughton is as faithful to Northamptonshire as yourself."

"Did you happen to hear any thing,—did Emma happen to mention to you," resumed Mary, turning her horses' head a little further from that of the duke, as they coasted in a line the ha-ha of Kensington Gardens, "or have

you perhaps heard in London, a report that Gerald,—that Mr. Wroughton,—was very much attached lately to an English lady, by whom he has been shamefully used?"

"Not exactly as *you* represent the affair. But the report has reached me to which you allude."

"The other day at Lady Gosshawks, (the mother of those five little Miss Gosshawks, who go about curled up like fledglings in a nest in that very small green chariot,) we dined in company with a Mr. Hertford or Hartford, or some such name, who was talking of Naples; and happening to sit next him, I naturally inquired after Gerald. "Poor fellow, he has been regularly bit!" was all I could extract from him; but at length, the duchess began to question him across the table about some lady something or other, whom she spoke of as a

shocking woman, not fit for society; and this proved to be the very person by whom Gerald was so infamously used."

Lord Monthermer's indignation was rising; not against poor simple little Mary, but against her malicious informants. At that moment, however, having reached the foot of the bridge, he was obliged to draw back, to leave room for the duke to escort his fair charge; when, looking up as he followed the party, Monthermer discerned at a stone's throw before him, Lady Adelaide de Vere, in person, as majestically beautiful as ever; with Lord Portumna at her right hand, and at her left, a fine gay bold-faced and strikingly handsome young man, with whom she was familiarly conversing.

The blood rushed to the face of Gerald's brother-in-law, as he hailed the startling apparition! To approach Lady Adelaide, sur-

rounded as she was, appeared out of the question; even to attract her eye towards him, might be a matter of difficulty. But as she drew near, *that* dilemma was set at rest. Their horses came so closely in contact in consequence of an accidental pressure of equestrians on the favourite spot, that Lady Adelaide looked directly upon him; and instantly checking the joyous smile with which she was listening to the sallies of her left hand cavalier, she gave him so calm and cold a bow, as chilled the very depths of his soul.

Mechanically Lord Monthermer rode on, to rejoin his companions; and Mary de Ligne had twice reiterated the inquiry which marked her consciousness of his being again by her side, before she could obtain a reply.

"Did you notice a beautiful woman who just now passed us?" she inquired. "Did

you ever see any one so lovely? Can you tell me her name?"

"It is the lady you have just been calumniating," replied Monthermer, forcing a smile. "It is she whom you accuse of having—"

"Of having behaved so ill to Mr. Wroughton?" exclaimed Mary, with a rising blush. "Is *that* the object of Gerald's attachment? Indeed, I no longer wonder at him. He is fully exonerated. But what is her name?"

"I am surprised to find her a stranger to you, for she belongs to Northamptonshire. It is Lord Colebrooke's daughter."

"Lord Colebrooke's daughter?—Lady Adelaide de Vere?"—cried Mary, her colour assuming a yet deeper blush. "Surely,—surely, you must be mistaken. Surely Gerald would never,—surely—"

"You appear to be strangely prejudiced

against one with whom you are unacquainted," said Lord Monthermer, somewhat sternly.

"I am not unacquainted with her character. I have heard Lady Adelaide formerly spoken of at Helmsley Abbey. I recollect her being pointed out as a warning and object of avoidance to Emma and myself."

But before Mary de Ligne had quite finished her sentence, Lord Monthermer touched his hat and galloped off; and while one of the elderly slouches nodded significantly to his ducal brother, as a sort of silent congratulation on the conquest achieved by his little country cousin, Miss de Ligne kept reproaching herself during the remainder of her ride, for having probed the half healed wounds of the disconsolate widower by this indiscreet allusion to the lamented Lady Helmsley.

CHAPTER XI.

What a pyed ninny's this!

TEMPEST.

"Don't you find London a horrid bore?" demanded young Harford of Lord Monthermer, to whose side he attached himself that evening on meeting him accidentally in the lobby at the opera.

"I seldom find any place a bore in the month of May," was the evasive reply.

"I can't say that any influence of weather has much effect on *me*," observed Harford,

pulling down his showy waistcoat, with an air of self satisfaction. "I dare say the month of May may be very pleasant to the linnets and chaffinches, but—"

"Sunshine and green leaves are not to your taste?" replied Monthermer, listlessly filling up the phrase.

"'Pon honour, the sunshine of a London summer is so little to be compared with that of a Neapolitan winter, that the very cypresses of Italy are more verdant than any green thing one sees within twenty miles of town."

"You are partial to Italy," said Monthermer,—not thinking it necessary to set before the *attaché*-at-large, that all he missed in London was the local importance derived from his diplomatic button; that, after the fantastic tricks of consequence he had been playing, it was mortifying to find himself a small unknown

in that world which presumes to call itself *par excellence* THE WORLD.

For after all, the heir of millions was but as a drop of water,—although of *honey* water,—in that contending ocean of pride and pelf.—Harford was indebted in London to chance, for any introduction he might obtain into the class of society opened to him at Naples by his position as a shred of lace attached to the skirts of the ambassador. Sir Jacob Harford, omnipotent at his desk in Mincing Lane, might cause thrones to tumble and dynasties to look blue; but even had he been so inclined, the old banker could do little to forward his nephew over the solfatara of fashionable life, inaccessible per force of railroads or other utilitarian means and appliances.—A countess or two whose noble earl was deeply dipped in Sir Jacob's books, might have been engaged to stand godmother to the new

comer. But the old banker was a man far above such dirty chaffering.—His personal connexion with the peerage was confined to a few high-blooded, high-boned, low-pursed Scottish nobles,—four or five of whose six goodly sons are booked in Debrett, "Resident at Bagherabad near Delhi," or "H. E. I. C.'s agent for Camels at Zocotora;" and three or four of whose illustrious sisters married to East India directors, stockbrokers, or army-agents, amending the quality of their barley-broth at the expense of their aristocratic dignity.—But these, though per favour of their dinners, concerts, and balls, admitted on sufferance within the pale of fashionable life, are too conscious of having forfeited caste to presume on the introduction of others into consecrated ground.

"I don't think there is much going on to-night?"—continued Harford, after having com-

pelled himself to listen to one of Albertazzi's songs,—Albertazzi, whom he had admired in Italy as an Italian, and whom he despised in England, on discovering her to be an Englishwoman.

"I really do not know," answered Monthermer, striving to make his way down the centre alley of the pit, for the purpose of commanding a full view of the house which probably contained the lovely object of his perplexities.—"I am going only to Lady Margaret Baddeley's."

"Lady Margaret Baddeley?—who the deuce is she?"—

"A Northamptonshire neighbour of mine, and a charming woman."

"Oh! yes,—I know;—I could have *got* there if I had liked; only Flaszaski told me it would be a horrid style of thing. There was a capital party last night at the Duchess of Havering's."

"Did you think so?—I found it stupid enough,"—said Monthermer, still directing his glass inquiringly round the house.—

"Oh! I was not there. I could have *got* there if I had liked. But Flaszaski said I should find it the deuce of a bore."

"The duchess is pleasanter, I admit, in her Saturday night *petit comité*, than at her official parties. St. Leger Kerr calls her Mondays the numbering of the tribes."

"Or votes, I suppose.—You go then to the woman's supper-parties?"

"I have been to one," said the matter-of-fact ex-baronet.

"I could *get* there if I liked. It would only be to speak to Lady Adelaide de Vere, whom I see every day, and who would do *l'impossible* to oblige me."

"Is Lady Adelaide here to-night?"—said Monthermer, with tolerable calmness.

"I suppose so—for I nodded to Portumna as I came in. I dare say she is in Sud's box. Do you know Sud?—Ha!—Royston, my dear fellow,—the very man I was looking for!"

And Lord Monthermer, as the slim attaché pinned himself to the skirts of the brother of his friend Leck whom he drew anxiously away, heard him inquire in an audible whisper,—"*Could* you manage to get me to Lady Margaret Baddeley's?"

"Sud!"—Who or what manner of man might answer to this ignoble monosyllable?—Was it the young cavalier of the morning, with his large dark eyes, and well-made person arrayed in an equally well-made coat?—"*Sud*!" A Sud with a box at the Opera and a hack worth two hundred guineas. Monthermer half determined, (for a lover's spirit of research is almost as untirable as that of an antiquary), to

coast the first three tiers of boxes, and examine the names inscribed in letters of dingy white or gold upon a dingier blue ground, for a patronymic commencing with the three charmed letters S U D. But scarcely had he accomplished half the circuit of the ground tier, when he was pounced upon by the Duchess of Kimbolton as she entered her box, and compelled to imprison himself with her and Mary.

"What a singular thing it is," observed Miss de Ligne, after they were seated, "that the large pit box on the stage is never occupied during the opera; or, if at all, only by two or three young men who talk and laugh the whole time as if in defiance of the music. But the moment the ballet is about to begin, see how it is crowded by all the old beaux,—Sir George, —Lord Loxley,—the Duke of Wexford,—and every other white-headed dandy in town!"

"My dear, that is a very natural remark, but I must beg of you on no account to make it again," said the duchess, addressing a prim but significant smile to Monthermer, peculiarly calculated to excite the curiosity of the pure and *naïve* country girl, concerning the eligibilities and attractions of Chalk Farm.

"Ah! there is Count Flaszaski. See how they all make room for him and question him! and there is that Mr. Harford, staring at them from the pit as if he were dying to be among them," persisted Mary, amused by the anxious countenance of the chalk-cherishers opposite their box.

"*Miss de Ligne!*" said her grace, in a severe tone of remonstrance; and to avert Lord Monthermer's attention from the confusion of his future wife, she inquired whether they should not meet him presently at Lady Chertsey's?

"I am sorry to say *not*;—I am going to Lady Margaret Baddeley's."

"Oh! *dear* no!—one of the worst houses in London. You must not go to Lady Margaret's. You must give me the pleasure of presenting you to Lady Chertsey."

"I fear I"—

"Lady Chertsey is my cousin."

"I regret to say I"—

"Lady Chertsey will be delighted to make your acquaintance."

"Had I not already promised to"—

"Oh! promises about parties are made to be broken. Poor Lady Margaret has such tremendous mixtures, such dreadful mobs, that you will never be missed."

"Not perhaps in any other house, but as we are neighbours in the country"—

"An additional reason for seeing as little as possible of each other in town."

"I am extremely sorry to be"—

"Besides, at Lady Chertsey's you will hear news of all your friends at Naples. Lady Chertsey's niece is married to Lord Colebrooke's only son; and the whole family will be there."

Mary de Ligne, a silent auditress of all that was passing, could not forbear noticing that Lord Monthermer began unaccountably to veer round to acquiescence, on this temptation; before he quitted the box, it was arranged that he should return after the first act of the ballet, to accompany them to the ball of the Countess of Chertsey.

On releasing himself from the overpowering presence of the duchess, who occupied three fourths of her diminutive box, Monthermer no longer judged it necessary to proceed on his *Sud*ermanian travels. Lady Adelaide, obliged to repair early to a fête given by the family of

her sister-in-law, was doubtless afraid to encounter the fatigues of the opera as a prelude to the ball.

"I was just looking for you Monthermer," said Harford, pressing after him as he retreated a moment from the heat of the house into the round room. "I want you to give me a cast to Lady Margaret Baddeley's; or will *you* go with me in my cab?—One hates to go in alone; and Royston, who has compelled me to take one of the cards he had to dispose of, chooses to go first to Crockford's for some stupid appointment."

"I am not going to Lady Margaret Baddeley's; I have changed my mind and am going to Lady Chertsey's."

"To Lady Chertsey's?"—exclaimed Harford, in a tone of pique and surprise. "Why who the deuce do you expect to find *there?* Flaszaski told me this morning that Lady Chert-

sey's is called *l'hospice des ménages.* I could easily have *got* there, if I had liked it. Better come to Lady Margaret's?"

"No!—I am acting on your advice. It is indeed *toujours choucroûte* to see too much in London of one's country neighbours."

"What a bore!" drawled Harford, who was beginning to feel very much like a bewildered mite in the world of strange faces around him; and away he sauntered, deeply impressed with the eligibility of being a peer of the realm, as instanced in the good fortune which was pushing Lord Monthermer so rapidly to the top of the tree; while he, like the little fox in a fable-book, sat envying at the bottom.

Of the Countess of Chertsey, of whom till that evening Lord Monthermer had never heard, the name was ten thousand times repeated in his ears in the course of the next half-hour; in pursuance of the temporary importance annually

assumed, for a single evening, by the givers of annual balls.—"Are you going to Lady Chertsey's."—"The Cadogans are gone to Lady Chertsey's."—"All the world is to be at Lady Chertsey's," was repeated so often around him, that he felt grateful to the Duchess of Kimbolton for her opportune invitation.—Lady Margaret Baddeley, who suffered such a scapegrace as Lord Royston to assist in inviting her company, he was already beginning to despise.

It struck him, however, as remarkable that, as the Duchess of Kimbolton's carriage approached Whitehall where the mansion of Lady Chertsey was situated, they encountered at every step equipages full of fair faces, which were evidently flying from the ball; and on entering the vast, grim, gloomy hall of Chertsey House, they beheld the cloak room full of dames and damsels of fashion, muffled up for departure. The place was wretchedly lighted.

The bewildered servants were evidently those of a household unaccustomed to ball-giving, and unassisted by professional aid. The orchestra sounded shrill and thin in the lofty old-fashioned ball-room; the whole arrangement savoured of the last century!—

There is still a house or two left in London of this *rococo* description: opposed to all the innovations of modern fashion, and frequented by stately dowagers in crape turbans and diamond crescents, with stiff daughters in crape dresses and pearl sprays; while the gay and the brilliant fly from the spot as from the palace of the fairy Guignon.

The Duchess of Kimbolton, however, saw nothing to merit animadversion in a mansion where she was received with curtsies, deferential in proportion to her date of peerage, and where *her* presentation sufficed to obtain for Lord Monthermer, a distinguished welcome.

"Do pray ask me to dance!"—whispered Mary De Ligne while her chaperon was exchanging majestic civilities with her venerable lady-cousin; for Mary was unable at present to divest herself towards him of the familiarity with which girls are apt to regard the married country-neighbours of their father.—Sir William Helmsley had stood up with her, a hundred times, when she wanted a partner at the Christmas balls at the Abbey or High Grove, and she saw no reason why Lord Monthermer should be more fastidious;—more especially when his complaisance could spare her the annoyance of accepting as a partner, one of the short-faced long-footed Messieurs de Bathe, younger sons of the house of Chertsey.

Involuntarily, Lord Monthermer hesitated. It is difficult for a man of nine-and-twenty to say "No," to a woman, even though so much of a child as *he* considered Miss de Ligne.

But he had given up dancing, and entertained no thoughts of derogating anew to the quadrilling estate.

"My dear Mary,—Lord Logan wishes to be presented to you. Have you a partner?"—said the Duchess, bustling towards her *protégée*.

"Yes,—I am engaged to Lord Monthermer," replied Mary,—not conceiving it possible that her dear Emma's brother-in-law could prove ill-natured about such a trifle; and her grace's —"Oh! very well, my dear, yes—yes!—Go and secure your places," was so conclusive, that there was nothing to be done by Monthermer but offer his arm to Miss De Ligne, and push towards the most crowded quadrille, where they were least likely to attract attention.

Nevertheless, he was inexpressibly provoked. Satisfied in his own mind that Lady Adelaide was present,—that Lady Adelaide was probably observing him,—he could not support the

thoughts of figuring before her as the puppet of an insignificant little girl; while her ladyship and "Sud" were, perhaps, looking on contemptuous.

Mary, meanwhile, was delighted. *She* preferred Emma's brother-in-law as a partner, to the gayest cornet in the Blues, or finest gentleman of the Ineffables; for with *him* she could talk at leisure and hasten to smile;—with *him*, gossip of Northamptonshire, High Grove, Wroughton Hall;—to him confess her girlish London perplexities,—from him demand sympathy for her girlish country reminiscences. There was a favourite former playmate of hers at Helmsley Abbey, now the bosom friend of little Harry Delaval at Wroughton; a splendid Newfoundland dog named Turk, whose feats she was never weary of relating, and concerning whom she made a thousand sportive inquiries, during the pauses of the quadrille.

Lord Monthermer, of course, thought her very *naïve*, almost more *naïve* than even the prettiest girl is permitted to be; while the Duchess of Kimbolton who stood near, and the Duchess of Kimbolton's grim friend Lady Clementina, thought her exceedingly artful. They fancied she was talking *at* Lord Monthermer, while Mary fancied she was talking *to* Sir William Helmsley!

"Upon my honour that child is too bad!" said Lady Clementina aside, to her friend. "It will never do! Lord Monthermer is too old and too young to be taken in by such barefaced advances. A man must be either in his first or second childhood, to swallow a naked hook because it is suspended to a silken line."

"One can't say," replied the stately Kimbolton, with an air of reflection. "I have given her the best instructions in my power.

But I am beginning to suspect that, as every animal is born with the instinct fit for its peculiar necessities, every human being is endowed with the spirit of its times. In your day and mine, my dear, such proceedings would have been accounted preposterous. But manners change so strangely!—Perhaps the child may have picked up a better insight into those with whom she has to deal, than we are aware of."

"Your theories are all so profound!" replied Lady Clementina, with something that might pass for either a smile or sneer. "You certainly, my dear duchess, are one of the most original thinkers of my acquaintance."

Lord Monthermer, meanwhile, kept peering at every favourable interval through the crowd; hating in his soul the old-fashioned girandoles and parsimonious lustres that threw no brighter light upon their heads. At one moment, he

fancied he perceived in the embrasure of a window the raven hair of Lady Adelaide, in contrast with the white head of her father; but alas! on a second scrutiny, it proved to be only the black velvet hat in which, in the hottest of seasons, pretty little Mrs. V—— thinks proper to set off the dazzling fairness of her complexion; while what had appeared a Polonius-like poll, proved to be the silver-blonde turban of the most reverend lady of an archbishop. No Lady Adelaide had yet risen upon the darkness of Lady Chertsey's night.

At length, just as he was replying by a vague, absent smile to Mary's account of Turk's misdemeanors in a fishing-expedition which he had marred by his passion for rustling among the water-flags, Lord Monthermer saw every face turn towards the door, and every creature at liberty to move, press forwards in the same direction.

"They are going in to supper," said Miss de Ligne. "How wonderfully the London dowagers manage to be always hungry at the right moment!—A breakfast at twelve, a luncheon at four, a *déjeûner* at six, a dinner at eight, a supper at one, nothing comes amiss, provided Gunter stands accountable for the tenderness of the chickens and flavour of the tongues. Yes! they are certainly going in to supper," said she.

"They are certainly crowding to the door to see Lady Adelaide de Vere!" *thought* Monthermer.

"They are pushing to get places at the best table," added his partner in a tone of disdain.

The plot thickened, the crowd increased. A murmur of admiring voices became audible, Lord Monthermer's heart beat forcibly.

"What a beautiful woman!" cried Miss de Ligne, peeping between a diamond bandeau

and an emerald tiara which were looking inwards upon her from the door.

"It is herself!" murmured Monthermer. But the tone in which he pronounced these words was strangely altered as he added, with an air of consternation, "*Good God!—Lady Wycombe!*"

"Lady Wycombe?"—repeated the unsuspecting Mary.—"The Lady Wycombe of whom I have heard so much?—*Pray* let me have a glimpse of her. She has never been in London since I came out. I have always so longed to see Lady Wycombe!"

And Monthermer could have killed her for the warm interest she expressed in an arrival, which was to him so sad a source of mortification.

Instead of gratifying his pretty little partner by escorting her as she wished in the direction of the lady whom greeting and admiring groups

prevented from advancing very rapidly into the room, he coolly conducted her to the duchess; who, feeling that her *protégée's* intimacy with Lord Monthermer was too "decided a case" to render it prudent for them to expose themselves to be talked of, hastened to take Mary under her prodigious wing, and bear her off; while the ungracious cavalier, chiefly anxious to avoid an encounter with the fine lady whose exclusivism or *anti Devereism* he detested, disappeared in a contrary direction. Not however with an intention of quitting the lugubrious fête. Lady Adelaide, though probably detained at some other party, was certain to be there;—she would probably soon arrive,—his happiness was at hand.

It was a dull affair, *en attendant*, to bear with the ball. Every body worth a moment's attention who had been beguiled into appearing at Lady Chertsey's, took the earliest oppor-

tunity to mark their repentance, by hastily withdrawing. Not a creature of his acquaintance remained but the didactic duchess who prosed him to death, and Mary de Ligne who prattled him to death; saving Mr. Monckton who, having lost thirteen games at chess to the Duke of Kimbolton and seen him off to bed, came to inquire whether he could be useful to the duchess. It was his business, in return for the kindness with which her grace occasionally procured him tickets for the balls of the season, to secure her carriage being called and her cloak and slippers chosen. Lord Monthermer was amused to find himself reduced to the society of the odd man for relief, and still more amused to find that Mr. Monckton, when released from the house of bondage in Portman Square, was a companionable conversational man. When the duchess's "oh *dear* no!" no

longer frightened him out of his wits, Monckton was a man again!—

But man delighted not poor Monthermer, just then,—nor woman either. Unwilling to dance, unable to converse, he was growing fidgety almost beyond his control, when young Harford with his hair uncurled by waltzing, and his pink cheeks crimsoned by Champagne, suddenly made his appearance in time for the cotillon.

"What a horrid ball!" drawled he. "I was quite determined not to come, but Royston *would* bring me!—He had promised Lady Wycombe to make me come."

"But Lady Wycombe is gone?"

"Yes, and every one else, apparently! How *can* you drain a ball to the last drop!—How I do hate the cotillon,—it is such a deal of trouble! We had Mazurkas at Lady Margaret

Baddeley's!—A capital ball at Lady Margaret Baddeley's;—never saw poor Lady Adelaide in such force!"

"Lady Margaret Baddeley's?—Has Lady Adelaide been *there?*"

"Oh! yes,—all the evening!—They are country neighbours or something of that kind, you know; and the Colebrooke set invited half the company. Good night!—I positively can't put up with this stupid, blinking, owl-light *manqué* affair.—Good night!"

"Good night, Harford!" growled Lord Monthermer, as they parted in the hall;—what more was added by his lordship, need not be repeated here.

CHAPTER XII.

How sometimes nature will betray its folly
Its tenderness, and make itself a pastime
To harder bosoms!—

WINTER'S TALE.

To condescend to a visit of courtesy to Lord Colebrooke after the ungracious mode in which he had been recognised by Lady Adelaide, Lord Monthermer felt to be out of the question.—He must first elucidate the mystery; and ascertain whether the calumnies of others, or his own presumption when playing the part

of Petrarca, had produced so unsatisfactory a change in her demeanour.

But the Park was neutral ground. He might meet her in the Park,—perhaps manage to join her, and obtain the desired explanation.

It proved an anxious morning for more than one fashionable equestrian; for every now and then, the sunshine was overcast and a heat-drop or two fell upon the pavement, as if precursive of a storm. From his window in Grosvenor Square, Monthermer discerned fair forms appearing for a moment in neighbouring balconies with imploring looks upturned towards the sky; for *who* has not experienced the contrariety of a wet day unexpectedly intervening in the golden London spring, — to defeat hopes,—break through appointments,—depress the souls of dandies,—and obliterate the gloss of silk pelisses!—

But after all, the mischief on the present

occasion, ended in a threat.—The overclouded morning brightened into the finest of fine afternoons. Children and nurses came laughing and sporting into the square; coachmen no longer trembled for the buckle of their wigs, or beauties for the flow of their ringlets.—The blue sky grew bright,—the mignonette-boxes doubly fragrant,—the dust had been laid by the sprinkling showers.—It was the very day for a ride!

But, though every frequented part of the Park was thronged like the hill at Epsom for the Derby, no Lady Adelaide appeared.—Vainly did Monthermer examine every horse and horse-woman,—peer through every veil,—scrutinize every habit, black, blue, brown, or green. Unsatisfied with presiding over the detestable ball of Lady Margaret Baddeley, she was, perhaps, lounging at home with the still more detestable "Sud."

Turning, after all these researches, towards Grosvenor Gate, to quit the Park, he perceived the carriage of the Duchess of Havering dashing along with the full speed of its blood horses, and the sort of "I-am-no-frequenter-of-the-Park,-I-am-only-on-my-way-elsewhere" air, which bespeaks the disdain of an exclusive for the total want of engagement betrayed by habitual loungers in the Park. In a moment, the check-string was pulled.—The fine-mouthed horses stopped, as if by magic; and a footman nearly as tall as Mary De Ligne's majestic chaperon, approached Lord Monthermer to say that "Her Grace wished to speak to him."—

"Will you do the most goodnatured thing in the world?"—said she, frankly accosting Monthermer.—"I have just had a note from Lord George Cloudsley to say that, his grandfather having died this morning, he cannot fulfil a

dinner engagement with us to-day. If you are disengaged, be so amiable as to take his place.—I cannot accuse myself of incivility in this unceremonious invitation; for till I caught a glimpse of you on Monday night, I was not aware of your being returned to town."—

Disappointed and dispirited, Lord Monthermer was about to excuse himself on the score of a pre-engagement; when a sudden recollection of the duchess's affinity to the Colebrookes, induced him to change his mind. "He was *dis*engaged,—he would have the honour."

"At eight, then," said the duchess. And away went the magic horses towards Piccadilly, —away went Monthermer towards home.

As he dressed for dinner, turning a deaf ear to the small talk of the great Monsieur Fortuné, he began to moralize within himself, as disappointed men are apt to do, recalling to mind Langhorne's only too appropriate fable of the

"Boy and the Rainbow," which little Mary, after due tutorage from aunt Margaret, had repeated to him with laudable emphasis during his recent visit to Northamptonshire. Yet in spite of his moralization, as he approached Privy Gardens Hope dazzled him anew with expectations of catching the rainbow,—of meeting Lady Adelaide de Vere!

A grand London dinner-party, in hot weather, by the way, appears expressly devised for the purpose of making four-and-twenty deserving persons uncomfortable, of causing four out of eight excellent *entrées* to be served cold, and four out of eight excellent *hors d'œuvres* to be served hot; compelling people to eat their daily bread in purple instead of fine linen,—to be tight-laced, stiff-curled and clad in satin sheen, instead of enjoying with a few friends, a plain dinner in a plain suit of clothes. And to what purpose?—That you may sit next some in-

dividual whom you never before beheld, nor ever wish to see again;—that you may ascertain the full extent of Lord Carabbas's service of plate, and read the following day in the Morning Post, "Yesterday, the Marquis of Carabbas gave his fifth grand dinner for the season!"

Of the party assembled in the Duchess of Havering's drawing-room, Monthermer knew only the calm, cold, undemonstrative Sir Kenelm Hulme, who was to be found at all the dinner-parties of the season; and Lord Loxley, who, by some strange coincidence, had been found at every party given by the Haverings for the last fourteen years. Luckily, there was no tedious pause. Formal dinners in ministerial houses are not to be trifled with. Every body was punctual; and they sat down as the clock chimed a quarter past eight. Till the fourteenth minute of that trying quarter of an hour, Mon-

thermer flattered himself indeed, that Lord Colebrooke and his daughter would arrive to infringe the even number of the double dozen; and he accordingly fancied himself to be swallowing gravy soup while eating his *potage à la Reine*,—so overpowering was his sense of disappointment.

The first sound that startled him from his revery, was the conceited lisp of a young gentleman near him, whom he heard addressed as Sir Walter, remonstrating with a very handsome woman by his side.

"Oh! you really *must* lengthen them!—I should be ashamed to dance with Lady Mary at Almack's, were the tip of her shoe perceptible. Lady Wycombe, you know, is just come from Paris; and her dresses sweep the ground."

"It is a dirty and inconvenient fashion!"

said the Lady, "particularly as my daughters and myself are fond of exercise. But if Lady Wycombe has decreed it, of course it is to be. I shall go to Mrs. Murray to-morrow, and order a new set of dresses."

"Have you observed Lady Wycombe's *coëffure?*"—inquired another very pretty woman, across the table; "a simple double twist almost touching the nape of the neck. It *is* so tiresome!—My maid was just beginning to excel in *tortillons,*—and Lady Wycombe has settled nothing of the kind must be worn."

"And ringlets too!—*Bandeaux* were so very becoming to my girls,—I am quite sorry bandeaux must be given up!" added the lady sitting next Lord Monthermer.

"May I presume to ask *why* they are to be given up?"—inquired he, attempting to appear interested in these details of the toilet.

"Oh! because Lady Wycombe has settled it. I knew it was absurd to have any thing made up previous to her arrival from Paris. I was sure *she* would give us all a thousand new ideas."

"But if you prefer your own?"—

"Who *could* prefer her own to Lady Wycombe's, who has such exquisite taste, and has for so many years regulated the fashions of London?"—

"Did you see her throw away Lady Wendover's beautiful ivory and gold *porte-bouquet*, last night at Lady Chertsey's?"—inquired Sir Walter, of his handsome friend. "Such a thing as a *bouquet* has not been worn in Paris, she says, during the whole season."

"I was in Paris last month," observed a somewhat quizzical woman, whom Monthermer had often observed in company with St. Leger Kerr, "and I assure you"—

"Oh! Lady Wycombe *must* know best," was the general chorus.

"How tired I am of hearing you all offer up your blindfold homage to Lady Wycombe!" —cried a singularly handsome man, placed at some little distance, of whose countenance Monthermer entertained a vague reminiscence. —"You will end by not daring to walk under a green tree, without her warrant."

"Oh! *you* are an apostate!" cried his pretty neighbour.

"*Et pour cause!*"—muttered Sir Walter, finishing his glass of sherry.

"I have no patience, I confess," persisted the anonymous Adonis, "to see my countrywomen, endowed with good sense and good taste of their own, submit to a yoke or rather insist upon imposing on themselves a yoke, of foreign bondage. Lady Wycombe comes from Paris,—tells you that you are all

monsters,—and you believe her,—*because* she comes from Paris!—Has not London eyes,—has not London ears,—has not London understanding?"—

"Understanding, certainly—but *no* taste!"—cried two of the fair objects of his reprehension.—

"I cannot agree with you.—Taste and fashion are purely arbitrary. The Parisians, whose *taste* you value so highly, are quite as fond of imitating our fashions, as you of adopting theirs. From the period of the peace, Paris has been as much infected by the Anglomania as we by the opposite extreme; and most of the very fashions you are adopting, actually originated among yourselves."

"Well, never mind!—They come back to us, like East India Madeira, improved by the voyage. And then Lady Wycombe certainly *does* set them off to the best advantage!"

"Is she going to *give* any thing?" inquired Sir Walter, artistically swallowing a *bouchée d'huîtres* without splintering the fragile *patisserie.*

"I am sure I hope so, or we shall have a horrible season. I never fancy there is any thing doing, till Lady Wycombe's parties begin."

"Perfect infatuation,—perfect idolatry!"—ejaculated the opposition member; and Lord Monthermer, who shared in his antipathy, thought of the sobriquet, assigned her by Moorsom, of the Brazen Serpent. He had imbibed from the Colebrooke clique the worst opinion of Lady Wycombe's nature and disposition.

He was sorry, however, when a topic of conversation was dropped which had served to spur up the spirits of his fair neighbours; for he was in no mood to be amusing.—Englishmen are rarely gifted with the faculty possessed by foreigners, of being able to throw off their

cares and jest at the stake. A Frenchman feels it an insult to society to appear out of sorts, while John Bull chooses to assume that to make himself agreeable is an optional duty. No one has a claim upon *his* conversation! Unless here and there a man established in society on the agreeability score, who is seen spring after spring at the dinner-parties of the season, screwing himself up to the mark and putting on a sort of sprightly intelligent countenance lest his contemporaries should detect him repeating himself or the new generation vote him grown dull and twaddling, one rarely makes a dinner acquaintance which has not assisted, during the manufacture, to damp one's appetite.

The room grew hotter and hotter with excess of light and excess of *réchauds*. Even the fair faces of the ladies appeared to catch fire from

the reflexion of the red nose of the portly old *maître d'hôtel*, and the crimson Havering liveries in the background. Every one seemed conscious that the dinner was long and tedious; and when once that idea takes root, it flourishes with the deadly influence of the nightshade. At length, the welcome signal was given for the departure of the ladies. Gloves and handkerchiefs were picked up; and, as the feminine file marched past amid a confusion of chairs and rustling of silks, Lord Monthermer overheard the duchess inquire familiarly *en passant* of the handsome young *incognito*, "Pray shall I see Adelaide, to-night, at Almack's?"—

"I fancy not. Her father has a threatening of the gout; and when he is ill, you know, he can't bear her to leave him."

"Adelaide" from the lips of the duchess of Havering, clearly implied her niece Lady Ade-

laide de Vere. But who was this young gentleman, so familiarly acquainted with her movements? — Could it be "Sud?" — Lord Monthermer was glad that even so slight a thing as the slender person of Sir Walter interposed between himself and the object of his suspicion.

Resolved to examine dispassionately the qualities of this intimate friend of Lady Adelaide,—perhaps this superseder of poor Gerald Wroughton,—he rejoiced to discover, in the course of a quarter of an hour's conversation which succeeded the departure of the ladies,—(that quarter of an hour so remarkable in English society for a sudden digression into obscenity like the infected exhalation following the extinguishing of light),—that the good-looking stranger so magnanimous in his disdain of Lady Wycombe, was a decided libertine; a man of

extremely refined manners but extremely coarse mind.—"Sud,"—if "Sud" he were,—was brilliant and showy, but a *roué* of the first water. Monthermer was glad for once to feel himself the superior.

"Is Lord Colebrooke seriously ill?"—he nevertheless cautiously inquired of the offender, as they proceeded together up stairs, after a few more glasses of claret.

"I am afraid so,"—was his reply; "for the old gentleman is a deuce of a bore when he gets the gout into his foot or head. I was with them at seven; and Adelaide had sent for Chambers."

It was impossible to say more, for they had reached the drawing-room. Eleven o'clock had struck; and the ladies of the party were already dispersed. Sir Walter carried off the unknown as soon as they had swallowed their coffee; and

Lord Monthermer, though now almost despairing of meeting Lady Adelaide at Almack's, determined to go there for five minutes, if only to inquire of the Duchess of Havering the name and pretensions of the gentleman who talked of "Adelaide."

But alas, on catching a glimpse of the Duchess of Havering at the further extremity of the glittering ball-room, he discovered that, as ministress of foreign affairs, she was doing the honours of Almack's to some piece of foreign royalty just arrived in town, whom the patronesses had saddled upon her patience, and who, being too heavy to dance, seemed resolved to prove that he was equally heavy in conversation. When, lo! the Duchess of Kimbolton, one of those lumbering women who think it impossible to cross a room without inflicting themselves on some unlucky victim, fastened

herself upon Lord Monthermer's arm as he was on the point of departure.

"You would oblige me particularly," she whispered, by way of marking to an envious sister-patroness that Lord Monthermer was *secured*,—"by engaging Miss De Ligne to dance. —That cool officious woman, Lady Gosshawk, has been asking my permission to introduce some Monsieur de something or other, to Mary; and a foreigner of whom one is not *quite* sure, is by no means a safe acquaintance. Till Lady Wycombe comes in to tell me whether the man is the right thing, I shall try to avoid the introduction; for Lady Gosshawk, who has five daughters of her own out and two of them here to-night, is much too shrewd a woman to introduce to a pretty girl any thing worth monopolizing for her family. I look upon *you*, Lord Monthermer, as an old friend of my

little *protégée* or I should not venture to make the request."

"I should really be—"

"Mary, my dear, I want you.—Thank you, Captain Montreville. Mary!—here is Lord Monthermer waiting to dance with you. Go! love, the set is forming."

And greatly to his vexation, Lord Monthermer found himself again standing up to dance with Mary De Ligne!—He began to rejoice that Lord Colebrooke's gout was keeping Lady Adelaide at home; more especially when he saw "Sud" and Sir Walter pass arm-in-arm along the room, with the sort of knowing significant smile by which some men delight in marking to the world their contempt of every thing decent and decorous.

To be out of humour with Mary was, however, impossible. It would have been like crushing a daisy to affect sternness towards that

young, fresh, fair, and innocent heart. He soon found himself conversing with her cheerfully. They talked of the perils and privations Gerald Wroughton was likely to encounter in his Oriental expedition; and Mary, though still asserting that Gerald would have done much better to return and spend the autumn in Northamptonshire, admitted, with one of the sunniest smiles of her Hebe-like countenance, that it would be a far more charming thing to form one of his party into the wilds of Albania, than of the Duchess of Kimbolton's to the downs of Epsom.

"You are going, of course, to Epsom?"—was her next inquiry.

"Yes—I suppose so. One follows the rest of the world."

"*Not every* one!" said Mary, heedlessly. "Mr. Wroughton, you see, goes into Greece."

"Perhaps," observed Lord Monthermer,

with a smile, "I have not his motives for being out of sorts with society."

"*Motives?*—It *was* true, then," inquired Mary, colouring deeply, "that he met with a disappointment this winter at Naples?"

"Gerald's disappointments signify more to him than either to you or me," replied Monthermer, evading the question; nor could he help feeling that a trip to Athens might eventually become as essential to himself as to his brother-in-law.

"Mr. Wroughton's disappointments may not signify to me," said Miss De Ligne, somewhat piqued,—"but I have a right to interest myself in the happiness of Emma; and were her brother to fall a sacrifice to the violence of his feelings, Miss Wroughton would never recover it."

"Do not alarm yourself," replied her partner, again attempting to smile. "Young gen-

tlemen's disappointments are not quite so overwhelming as young ladies are apt to imagine. Few men of the present day are likely to sink under the violence of their emotions."—

"I am beginning to think so!" cried Mary, taking his arm to return to her chaperon, and secretly reverting to his own frivolous forgetfulness of the home and happiness of his youth. "Few men have hearts; for which reason few men deserve to obtain one."

Lord Monthermer looked down with a smile of goodnatured sympathy, almost paternal, upon the pouting little girl whom even Almack's had not yet casehardened into insensibility; and, as he raised his eyes, they fell upon Lady Adelaide de Vere, who stood by, leaning familiarly on the arm of Sud. In her flowing robe of white satin, with a bandeau of brilliants binding down her raven hair, she looked like a queen; and queenlike was the bend of recog-

nition she bestowed upon Messer Francesco Petrarca.

"If you are going to Epsom, I am sure I wish you would come with *us*," resumed Miss De Ligne, reverting to their past conversation without perceiving his embarrassment. "The duke, you know, never moves, except sometimes to take an airing in the park or the King's Road; and, as the duchess is not fond of having young men dangling about her, she will certainly invite that tiresome old horror Mr. Monckton, by way of some one to take care of us. *Do* come!"

"I quite agree with you," replied Monthermer, who had not heard a word she was saying; and Lady Gosshawk, who stood listening beside them, was all admiration of Miss de Ligne's barefaced coquetry, and Lord Monthermer's Talleyrandic evasion of the snare. For people of the world are strangely at fault when they

assign motives for the conduct of their country cousins.

It was a relief to Monthermer, on restoring his little partner to the care of the Duchess, to find Lord Carpynter standing beside his sister. Lord Carpynter was the sort of dry, imperturbed, man, whose company is always a relief to men of excitable feelings. Lord Monthermer turned off to converse with his philosophical friend, certain that the topic selected would be either politics or literature; and so it proved. A new pamphlet on railways had issued forth that morning from pamphletiferous Piccadilly, which Lord Carpynter now argued through from page the first to page the two hundred and seventy-fifth,—not forgetting the appendix. There was no occasion to talk to him; all he wanted was a listener to be convinced by his borrowed eloquence.

Monthermer was perhaps of opinion that the

resignation with which he surrendered his button and ears to the noble proser, ought not to go unrewarded; for, at the close of the last long-winded period, he ventured to remark in return,—"How exquisitely handsome Lady Adelaide de Vere is looking to-night!"—

"Is she?—I have not observed her,"—replied the hard-minded old bachelor;—adding in a lower voice, as the railway question gradually faded from his imagination,—"*that* is a woman, I confess, whom I cannot bring myself to admire. Lady Adelaide de Vere is what is called a woman of the world,—a thing I abhor. A *man* of the world is a phrase I can understand;—a woman of the world is, or ought to be, an incongruity."

"You are severe!"

"Lady Adelaide is a person of exceeding plausibility;—I never heard any one converse whose truisms were so specious. But when

you examine more closely into her discourse, her trite moralities prove to be only the diluted aphorisms of higher minds. St. Leger Kerr (who considers her a decided humbug), calls her the spun-sugar edition of Mrs. Chapone."

"But why should Kerr,—why should your lordship—infer Lady Adelaide to be a humbug?"

"Because 'the lady doth protest too much!' —Whenever I hear a woman attempt to whitewash herself by diatribes on the corruptions of society and lamentations over the deceit of the world, I begin to inquire whether there be any special cause for this vehement manifesto of her virtues."

"But, *I* never heard Lady Adelaide bewail the corruptions of society!"—

"Not in plain spoken terms, for her terms are *never* plainly spoken. But she affects to

look down compassionately when the frailties of other women are spoken of, whom, were she an honest-hearted person, she would speak out to defend. Lady Adelaide is a most persuasive and therefore most consummate hypocrite. Look at her life,—both past and present, —how thoroughly at variance with her professions!—Of the past, Heaven forbid that we should pry into the disgraceful mysteries;—to the infamy of the present, we can all bear witness. Her husband's wrongs are registered in heaven; and as to the hearts she may since have broken, the innocent destinies she may have withered--"

"Pardon me,"—interrupted Lord Monthermer with a glowing countenance, "I ought perhaps to have prefaced the mention of Lady Adelaide de Vere's name, by acknowledging myself to be one of the most admiring of her friends."

"You *ought*," said Lord Carpynter drily—"and I shall therefore dispense with all apology. I am not surprised, my dear lord, at what you tell me. A handsome woman, with the reputation of so much talent and the possession of such infinite plausibility of cant, is sure to have a certain portion of the world on her side. But I am only fifty-three;—I have long since passed the first, and am not yet arrived at the second stage of dupehood. Ha!—Kerr—my dear sir,—a word with you. Have you seen this very able little treatise on the Moral Consequences of railroads?—A very promising thing, I assure you. A new writer, I suspect. From Oxford I rather imagine."

And away went Lord Carpynter, adhering like a limpet to a rock to the reluctant St. Leger Kerr, to whom he was preparing to recapitulate the contents of a pamphlet written by himself.

Meanwhile Lord Monthermer was startled to find that, greatly as his social importance had been increased by his accession to the peerage it was still further augmented by his debut in the dancing world. — Young ladies between seventeen and twenty, are hard to be impressed with the merits of a man, whatever the amount of his thousands a year, who is inaccessible as a partner.—A man, though a lord and a millionary, must be danced with again and again, before he can be properly appreciated.—A Lord Monthermer who could stand up in a quadrille, was a very different being in their eyes from a Lord Monthermer, "a widower with a young family." He was now grown young and handsome,—remarkably handsome and quite young enough. They were all dying to dance with Lord Monthermer.

The reflections of the dowagers were scarcely less favourable. A dancing-man, they thought, must necessarily be a marrying-man; and when the Lady Marias and Miss Louisas hinted to their mammas that his lordship was an acquaintance it would be highly desirable for them to make, the mammas proceeded in their turn to the Duchess of Kimbolton.

"Pray, my dear duchess, present your friend Lord Monthermer to me. I find he is a dancing-man, and I should like to have him at my balls," said one.

"Duchess—pray introduce us to Lord Monthermer. He will make a charming partner for my girl. You must do a good turn for your little friend Louisa," cried another.

"May I ask the favour of your grace to make me known to your friend Lord Monther-

mer?—With three girls out, as I have, it becomes a mother's duty to look about for young men who are not too fine to dance,"—observed a third.

"And with *my* FIVE!" ejaculated poor Lady Gosshawk. — "My dear duchess! it would be really quite a charity!"

All crowded round the duchess, beseeching her like so many matchwomen begging in the name of their five small children;—while the duchess replied, to some graciously,—to some condescendingly;—but alluding to Lord Monthermer as if he were as decidedly her property as her diamond necklace.

Unconscious of the motive of this accession of popularity, Lord Monthermer went through half a dozen introductions with great resignation and without having his eyes bandaged. But he asked no one to dance;—he

danced no more. Fixed against the wall, as if nailed against it kite-fashion, a warning to men of his years, he stood contemplating from a distance the unspeakable beauty of a woman so distinguished in loveliness, that, even amid the three hundred persons still present, he could distinguish her as a planet is distinguishable in the starriest sky. Not a word that he had heard to her discredit conveyed a deteriorating idea to his mind. Was it wonderful that any thing so charming should meet with detractors?—The only faults he could discern in Lady Adelaide was the tender smile with which she listened to the sallies of the Duchess of Havering's libertine dinner-guest, on whose arm she was leaning.

Lord Portumna, who was devoting his whole attention to Lady Wycombe, appeared to be altogether dismissed; and poor Monthermer,

out of patience with all he saw and heard, soon made his way to the door,—to his carriage,—to his own room; and dismissing the wondering Monsieur Fortuné, threw himself on his feverish bed to dream of "Sud!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Gorgo. But come, take your cloak, to Adonis we haste,
And fasten your robe with its clasps to your waist;
Our queen is preparing a sight so divine!
Prasinoe. Ay! all things, be sure, with fine people are fine.
But, prithee, describe these preparations so novel
To me, who live coop'd in this lone little hovel.

POLWHELE'S THEOCRITUS.

THERE are two things whose impetuosity leaves an indelible impression on the mind; the Danube, rolling boisterously forward with its icebergs after a prodigious thaw,—and the movement of London, in the height of its season. The multitudes, — the equipages,—

the wealth,—the human mind,—in motion on all sides, under impulses one does not understand, and with views of which one knows nothing, are truly overpowering.

London is a pleasant place, however, to those who, like Lord Monthermer, command access to society without having recourse to the basenesses to which the *merely* fashionable condescend; to those who, from the proudest duchess to the obsequious Bond-street tradesman bowing and showing his white teeth for an order, are every where eagerly welcomed.

"'Pon my soul,—this is a most divine house!"—cried Harford, who called and was unluckily admitted to Lord Monthermer, just as, having made up his mind not to attend the drawing-room, he had ordered his horse for an early ride. "I don't wonder you were in such a deuced hurry to set off from Naples,—I don't

wonder you left poor Wroughton in the lurch. Wroughton's a capital fellow,—though deuced slow.—Where did you get this perfect rocking-chair?"

"By inheritance from my uncle, who imported it from New York."

"The devil he did!—I was afraid you were going to say who got it from the American minister. *My* uncle might have any thing that can be imported! The old fellow has *got* every thing indeed, but taste."—

"You must assist him with yours."

"He's such an obstinate old fool. He can't be persuaded that *I* know any thing of the world. But what can one expect of a man buried all his life in a compting-house?"

"That he should amass the millions I hear ascribed to Sir Jacob Harford."

"Oh! you *have* heard of Sir Jacob;—where the deuce *did* you hear of him?—Flaszaski

was quite in a rage that I should suppose he had ever heard of such a person. By the way, Monthermer, if you would not mind coming into the city, I wish you would dine with him on Sunday?—Portumna, I am sorry to say, has promised to come. I know he will be horrified at the governor, and the governor at him; and, as Sir Jacob sees dinner company only on Sundays, there will be half a dozen stock-exchange brutes to complete the nastiness of the thing. For my part, I have taken care to be engaged every Sunday since I returned to England."

"I shall have much pleasure in dining with Sir Jacob Harford," said Monthermer, hoping to get rid of his visitor by this concession. "I am not ass enough to underrate the importance of a man who holds a station of so much consideration in the country."

Young Harford, fancying that Lord Monthermer was only quizzing him in the style he found himself quizzed at Naples by Alexis Bagot, and in London by Alexis's brother, looked foolish; again reverted to the beauty of some vases of old Sèvres mounted *à la Louis XIV.*, which graced the *encoignures;* then suddenly broke out into—"So old Colebrooke has got something at last!—I suppose it is all the Duke of Havering's doing."—

"I have not heard of Lord Colebrooke's having any thing but the gout?"—

"My dear fellow, he has got the Bath. I dined yesterday at Lady Wycombe's, and I heard somebody say he had got the Bath."

"That he was *sent* to Bath, perhaps?"—said Lord Monthermer.

"If he were sent any where, I should think it would be to Coventry," said Harford, with a

sneer. "But I know what I say. He applied for the Mint, which is vacant; and the king, after listening to the Duke of Havering's recapitulation of his brother-in-law's services, answered that the Mint was disposed of, and proposed to reward them with the red riband.—Now, considering that poor Colebrooke is so wretchedly out at elbows, this is adding insult to injury. They say *his* debts and Lord Sudford's amount to half as much again as the value of his estates."

"Lord *whose*?"—

"Sudford,—his eldest son,—a capital fellow,—the greatest *roué*, and the handsomest man about town! But of *course* you know Sudford?—Every body knows Sud!"—

"I dined with him yesterday at the Duke of Havering's."

"Yes,—I heard him say at the Travellers',

he was going to nepotize. Poor fellow! I fancy the Mint would suit him as well as his father. I heard him telling Flaszaski that he had sold off his hunters and given up his cook; and that Lady Sudford (with whom he is on cat-and-dog terms) had been proposing a separate maintenance. 'But I am obliged to deny myself the common comforts of life,' said Sud. 'We actually cannot afford to live apart!' "

"I see nothing to admire in his tone of conversation or code of morality," said Monthermer, stiffly. "But he is a man of striking appearance."

"Yes—striking enough!—in the style of his sister, who—"

"Shan't you be very late for the drawing-room?" suddenly inquired Lord Monthermer, actually shrinking from the chance of hearing

some new accusation against Lady Adelaide. "I conclude you are going?"

"Yes,—no;—'pon honour I have hardly made up my mind!" said Harford, delighted to have brought Lord Monthermer to the point; for the object of his visit was simply to mark his indifference to the fashionable business of the day. "I was at the levée, yesterday; so that there is no absolute necessity for me to bore myself. By the way, you were not at the levée?"

"I was presented at the last, and last drawing-room before Easter. To-day, therefore, I am not going; but I recommend you to think of dressing."

"You think it would be noticed if I should shirk the thing?"

"Decidedly! Holding an appointment, as you do, you cannot—"

"Well, since you consider it so important,

I—and, now I recollect,—Portumna, who is to present me, made it a particular point that I should not be late. He has the *entrée*, you know, in virtue of his office, and—"

"Yes, yes!—Good bye!—I must not let you lose more time."

And great was the relief to Lord Monthermer to see the door close upon the conceited jackling in office.

The least observant traveller from Dan to Beersheba, may have noticed as he coasted some rivulet or river that though an interposing fragment of rock rising out of its channel, suffices to fret the waters into foam, sound, and fury, signifying nothing, yet no sooner has the stream overcome the influence of the obstacle, than the current becomes smooth as before, but devoid of interest or animation. It was surprising how suddenly the fever-fit of

Lord Monthermer's mind subsided, after the discovery which annihilated his dread of rivalship. He had watched Lady Adelaide closely the preceding night. No other man had approached her than the "Sud," now become innocuous. Even Lord Portumna held off. There was, consequently, nothing to fear from the contention of pretenders to her smiles.

He had thus acquired leisure to deliberate on all he had heard, not only of herself, but of other members of the Colebrooke family; and there was nothing advantageous in the retrospect. The fall of the thermometer of his attachment between Wednesday night and Thursday morning, was indeed prodigious. Finding that there was neither love nor matrimony in the case, he began to resent Lady Adelaide's alteration of demeanour towards him, as an indication of caprice; and, as an

impulse of mere caprice, was prepared to resent it.

Suddenly checking himself in the act of pacing the room, which is so sure a symptom of a lover's irritability and the nascent eloquence of a rehearsing member of parliament, he made up his mind to *change* his mind, and hasten to court. So soon after Lady Adelaide's arrival in England, she must necessarily be presented. He would meet her, —confront her,—and demonstrate by his perfect self-possession, his indifference to her coolness or contempt.

Gossage the great, who, if the truth must be told, had entertained somewhat disparaging notions of his new lord on finding that the wealth and honours of all the Shropshires descended to an insignificant country baronet, (one of those who since their late meetings and petitionings have acquired in the servant's halls

the significant name of *badgers*,) relented in Lord Monthermer's favour on noticing his caprice about his house; and now, when he heard the issue of orders for the carriage and servants with their state hammer cloth and liveries, to be got ready in a quarter of an hour for the drawing-room, almost hoped to find in him a worthy successor to the wilful Lord Bridgnorth. Though the head-coachman grumbled about want of due notice, and the footmen fretted lest their silk stockings might not be sufficiently pinked for a daylight exhibition, vainly representing that my late lord the earl, never took steps of such importance without having duly apprized them, the commons' voice was as inaudible to the throne in Grosvenor Square, as in Stable or Palace Yard. After three quarters of an hour delay, Lord Monthermer found himself involved in the momen-

tous string of carriages proceeding to the drawing-room.

Just as he reached half-way down St. James's Street, it occurred to him that, after all, his labour might prove labour lost. With a vague recollection of having heard from the spiteful Mrs. St. Paul that Lady Adelaide had never been received at court) he recalled to mind instances of ladies excluded, under similar circumstances, from the circle of Queen Charlotte. That the interdict had since been removed, he was well aware; nay, he had some idea of an especial exception having been made in favour of Lord Colebrooke's daughter. Yes! Dr. Moorsom had certainly asserted that the innocence of Lady Adelaide was fully recognised in the highest quarter.

But even this slight misgiving had cast if not a rock, at least something more than a pebble

into the stream; and before his carriage attained the gateway of the palace, all poor Monthermer's *sangfroid* was merged in anxiety to ascertain whether Lady Adelaide would or would *not* participate in the ceremonies of the day. It was of *her* only he thought, as he entered the glittering throng pressing forward to the presence of royalty.

But though by this time familiarized with the aspect of fashionable life, he was not habituated to the brilliant display of such scenes as now awaited him. The contrast afforded by court costume to the studied plainness of English every day dress, may account for the fact that not a court in Europe presents so striking and characteristic an aspect as our own. St. James's is almost the only court indeed that can be said to retain a costume; and between the waving of its plumes and the resplendence

of its scarlet uniforms, nothing can be more imposing. The Imperial Court of Russia may perhaps excel us in point of variety and showiness of uniform, or intrinsic value of jewels. But at St. Petersburgh, two important points are deficient; female beauty and uniformity of refinement. Discrepancies are there perceptible, such as ever shock the senses at one of the crowded birthdays at St. James's.

Lord Monthermer recovered from the first *coup d'œil*, only to be worried by the civilities of his friends and acquaintance.

"*Lord Monthermer*? — Why you told me you were not coming?" — cried Sir Kenelm Hulme.

"*You here*?—I understood last night you had made up your mind to stay away?"—said Lord Royston.

"*Monthermer*? — Heigh-day! — Why you

swore you wouldn't come?"—exclaimed little Harford.

"My dear fellow!—you are positively changeable as a fine lady; I was going to say a *weathercock*—but recollected in time that the wind has been due east for the last seven weeks," added St. Leger Kerr, shaking him warmly by the hand; while the Duchess of Kimbolton stood perplexed between her fear that Monthermer had purposely deceived her, and her hope that Mary's arguments were the cause which had induced him to change his mind. Mary meanwhile, frankly accosted him with—"Oh! I am so *glad* you are come!—How well you look in regimentals,—I should scarcely have known you!—I am in such fear of my feathers coming unfastened, and of being presented!"

And while the prodigious duchess stood in-

quiring into his plans, (taking up as much room as poor old Lady D. in the day of hoops thirty-two inches in diameter,) a dozen angry beauties of minor dignity elbowed their way past, wondering what right people had to block up the way, in such a place, at such a time.

Not desirous of sharing the obloquy, Lord Monthermer passed on with the rest; receiving unmoved a thousand pearly smiles, and dispensing ungraciously a hundred formal bows; when, on his progress towards the presence chamber, his eyes happened to fall upon a rueful countenance, with which he fancied himself familiar; and as he drew nearer towards the pillar behind which the doleful-looking lady and her train of green and gold brocade were ensconced, he perceived that the suddenly illuminated countenance which recognised his approach, was no other than that of Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson.

"Oh! dear me, Lord Monthermer!—what a terrible crowd!"—cried she, as he paused to accost her. "I'm most crushed to pieces!—I'm waiting here for Lady Mary Mitchell, who is to present me. Have you seen Lady Mary Mitchell?—How horridly all this is managed!—How much better things were done at Naples!"

"Have you been long returned?"—

"Only four days. We came with Lady Mary Mitchell and her daughters, who are going to spend the summer with us at Stoke Park.—Charming people, the Mitchells."

"They arrived at Naples only so short a time before I quitted it that—"

"Yes!—I recollect you went off quite at a start. You got a title and fortune, I remember, exactly on the night of my famous ball. Was n't it a capital affair?—I was saying yesterday to Mr. Longman-Tompkinson, that he must try

to find you out, for the Mitchells tell us you are grown quite a personage in London.—But I'm glad to find you don't forget old friends.—Lady Adelaide de Vere passed me just now as close as I am to you, without so much as a look. You see, things are altered with us. Instead of being at our mansion in Carlton Terrace this year (which is let to the Brazilian ambassador), we are forced to put up at an hotel. We are at the Burlington, and Mr. Longman-Tompkinson and myself will be most delighted to see you. But you must not expect to find things as they would have been at our mansion in Carlton Terrace; where, (as I was telling Lady Mary Mitchell this morning), the *goblin* tapestry was considered quite unique. Ah! there *is* Lady Mary, I declare!—talking to the gentleman in a blue riband and a star,—I wish I could catch her eye.—I am afraid she'll forget me: and and having lived abroad so long"—(the Long-

man-Tompkinsons had left London only the preceding spring)—" I actually know not a soul, and feel quite bewildered in England."

But the latter part of the lady's harangue was lost upon Monthermer. Having ascertained from Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson's idle chatter that Lady Adelaide had passed onwards, he took the earliest opportunity to move off.—It was in vain that Lady Gosshawk and three of her little brood, lay in wait for him. He even forgot to apologize to Lady Margaret Baddeley, whom he encountered on his road, for having absented himself from her ball;—but pushed on in a spirit of romantic enterprise, worthy of Thalaba.

It was not, however, till he had actually reached the royal presence, that the lady he was come so far to look upon, greeted his view. Lady Adelaide was in the act of paying her compliments in a style of grace and with a

share of favour in return, such as gratified him to the soul.—Lovely as she had been in his eyes from the first hour of their accidental meeting, never had she appeared so majestically beautiful as now; attired in the most dignified of costumes, and looking as if born to occupy the position she just then held.—All the pride of the country baronet came back upon the feelings of Lord Monthermer, as he admired her graceful good-breeding.

Detained in conversation for nearly ten minutes by one of the princesses, to whose household the late Lady Colebrooke had been attached, Lady Adelaide quitted the presence-chamber at the moment Lord Monthermer made his exit; and thus fortuitously thrown together, the lady, either following the dictates of a capricious nature, or *embarrassée de sa contenance*, acknowledged by a gracious smile the distant bow vouchsafed her. They

were obliged to pass on, side by side; and, by way of breaking the awkward silence she asked leave to present him to her sister Lady Sudford, a pretty little woman, by whom she had been presented on her return to England. The usual civilities followed; and Monthermer could scarcely forgive himself for the glow of delight excited in his bosom by the altered conduct of Lady Adelaide.

"I regret to hear," said he, "that Lord Colebrooke is indisposed."

"My father is suffering from the gout. He will be gratified to learn that you do not forget him. At *his* age, people grow punctilious; he has more than once expressed his mortification at your not having inquired after him since you came to town."

"I had not the honour of being aware of his lordship's address."

"The mystery would not have been *very* difficult to unravel!" observed Lady Adelaide, in her usual gentle accents, and with a second smile, more fascinating if possible than the first; "particularly as I find from Mr. Harford, that he sees you daily; and from my brother, that he had the pleasure of dining with you yesterday at the Duke of Havering's."

Lord Monthermer's confusion was every moment increasing. *He* to be accused of neglect! *He* to be reviled with indifference! What would he have given for courage to burst forth into an angry recrimination of—"Why—why have you hitherto repelled me by so unjustifiable a change of manner?"

But the laughing eyes of little Lady Sudford were fixed upon him, with a significance of expression that reduced him to silence. Conscious of the awkward part he was playing, it was a relief, when, as they mingled once more

in the throng, hundreds of admiring countenances were turned upon Lady Adelaide de Vere; and his own silence was concealed under the universal homage tendered to the handsomest woman at the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XIV.

O! thou that reconcil'st the faults of all
Thy frothy sex, and in thy single self
Confin'st a spacious world of virtuous women,
Hadst *thou* been the beginning of the sex,
The very devil in his serpent's skin
Had wanted cunning to o'ercome thy goodness,
And all had died in innocency.

NATHANIEL FIELD. 1612.

IT is amusing to take note of the reluctance affected by certain fine ladies to encounter the fatigues and plumed state of the drawing-room; and the promptitude with which they submit to prolong their martyr-

dom at an evening assembly, given for the display of their finery. Some philanthropical party-giver or other is sure to open her house on the night of a court or birthday, in order to facilitate the exhibition; while for the consolation of stars of inferior magnitude, there is the forlorn hope of the King's Theatre. At such places as Devonshire and Lansdowne Houses, the splendour of the general effect is, perhaps, worthy of the sacrifice; but at houses of lesser note—where a crested lady or two, ashamed of her own finery and resembling a running footman in a continental crowd, indulges her trivial courtly vanity to the mortification of the ex-courtly many,—there is more motive for merriment than admiration.

At the party given that night by the Marchioness of Glenvillian more than a hundred ladies of the plume exhibited their grandeur;

the Duchess of Kimbolton looking like the hearse of some fair maiden having all the ostriches of Senegal plucked for its adornment; while the little Miss Mitchells, in a full-fledged group, resembled a covey of Balearic Demoiselles.

With unbounded elation of spirit, did Lord Monthermer make his appearance among these feathered tribes. The ceremony of the morning and its fatigues, afforded of course the prevailing topic. On all sides, nothing was to be heard but—"How did you get away?"—"Were you there long after I left you?"—"I passed you as you were hurrying off to your carriage, and thought you looking pale and tired. That trying Pomona green train!—You should never venture on green!—Green is fatal to people of your complexion!"

Some exhibited affectation, some ill-nature.

Lady FitzFlymflam kept protesting that "the drawing-room afforded at least *one* unrivalled enjoyment, that of getting away again;" while a dark lady, celebrated for a quality of speech which many call audacity and a few, wit, was heard exclaiming—"Well! now we've paid tribute to Cæsar, I hope Cæsar will be civil enough to pay tribute to *us*.—Has any one heard news of a ball?"—

It was among the loftiest presences that Monthermer directed his search after one, the majesty of whose person was only rivalled by its graces. Decoyed from room to room of the splendid suite by waving plumes high towering above the rest, he observed little Lady Sudford flit up and down like a peewit, but no Lady Adelaide; nor was it till he had begun to despond that he discovered her, half concealed in a remote corner, in conversation with a

man neither young, handsome, nor distinguished-looking;—her court plume dismissed,—her usual simplicity of costume quietly reassumed.

"I have been seeking you for the last hour in vain," said he, "having doomed myself to disappointment by the folly of looking for you—"

"In my morning's finery, perhaps?" said her ladyship, with a gracious smile. "No!—I was glad to set myself at liberty for a stroll in the park enclosure, after the heat of the morning. I have a prejudice too that the costume appropriated to the presence of royalty, ought to be exclusively dedicated to court."

"Charming and discriminating theory!" exclaimed her elderly friend,—(a serious conservative lord, whom Lady Adelaide's plausibilities had long placed among the parti-

zans of "one of the most intellectual of her sex.") "In these days of universal mockery, how refreshing to meet with *one* female mind, earnest in its loyalty and true to its moral principles!"

While the noble lord was apostrophizing, the noble lady took the opportunity to make room by her side for a delinquent whose proxy was deposited in the hands of the most liberal of ministers.

"You complain of the heat of the morning. I trust you have not suffered from fatigue?" inquired Monthermer, in that flutter of spirits which leaves little scope for the display of eloquence.

"Oh, no! I was too much gratified to be fatigued. Few things delight me more than the noble aspect of an English drawing-room. I find there so much to be proud of—so much to be pleased with! The continent has

nothing to exhibit comparable with the purity of countenance and simplicity of manner, manifested in our women; or with the serene dignity of expression remarkable in our men. How different from the meretricious air of foreign beauties, and the laborious graces of foreign exquisites!—I was never more struck by the contrast than this morning."

"Towering above the vulgar envy of her sex!" thought Monthermer; adding aloud, as an involuntary homage, "*You* can afford to be just—*you* can allow yourself to be generous!"

"What a delightful evening you gave us at Lady Margaret Baddeley's!" observed her elder votary, (apprehending that, since a handsome young man had joined the party, it might be indispensable to talk of balls) "I have always made it a point of conscience to go to Lady Margaret's parties, for we are nearly related: henceforward, I shall feel it a recreation."

"But I do not promise you *always* to invite the company, or get up mazurkas!" said Lady Adelaide, with a smile.

"I was greatly disappointed not to have the honour of seeing you at Lady Chertsey's that night!" interposed Monthermer. "You were *expected* at Lady Chertsey's."

"And *you*, at Lady Margaret's!" replied her ladyship, with a still gentler smile. "But to say the truth, I had other motives for not going to Chertsey House. My sister-in-law, a near relation of Lady Chertsey, has been unkindly treated by the family; and I consider it a duty for near relatives to uphold each other unbiassed by the opinions of the world."

"A noble principle!" cried Lord Slowgo, with enthusiasm. But Monthermer cried nothing. He was pondering in indescribable emotion over the inference conveyed by Lady

Adelaide's expression of—"*other* motives!" Was it, then, a motive for her to attend a ball, that his humble presence was expected?—Could it be that he was distinguished by her preference?—Impossible just then to push his discoveries by a leading question! Lord Slowgo, (a highly respectable man with a wife and family, who felt that he was honouring virtue in honouring a woman capable of uttering such sentiments as those of Lady Adelaide de Vere,) having taken the cue from her last aphorism, was prosing away to his heart's content, in a discourse previously prepared for the heads of an article in the Quarterly to be hung upon the peg of the first ethical work destined to be anointed with the oil of gladness: one of those mild, magnanimous articles, resembling the soft music struck up to soothe the mind of the public, between the acts of some murder-loving tragedy.

It was in vain, therefore, that Monthermer attempted to catch her eye,—to obtain her ear. The well-bred Lady Adelaide sat listening with an air of candour, which encouraged the proser into sentences as long as our last, and exemplifications almost as far-fetched. Monthermer would have given worlds to persuade her to take his arm, and remove to some less rational quarter of the room. But Lady Adelaide was thoroughly continentalized out of the English habit of wandering up and down a crowded assembly, to display her own beauty and criticise that of others; being of opinion that woman ought to remain stationary on her pedestal, while men perform pilgrimages of worship from idol to idol.

"That is a lovely creature who was with the Duchess of Kimbolton this morning at the drawing-room!" observed Lady Adelaide, most

syncopically, at the first full stop which enabled her excellent friend Slowgo to take breath and give quarter.

"This morning?" inquired Monthermer, trying to recal his scattered thoughts, and not conceiving that a child like Mary De Ligne could be considered worthy of inquiry.—"I observed no one in particular with the Duchess of Kimbolton this morning?"

"Oh! yes;—a pretty delicate creature, much too fairy-like to pretend to her gigantic arm. Pray suggest to the duchess to promote her to the palm of her hand. She would look like the little ivory Victory held by the colossal marble Minerva of the Parthenon."

"You must surely mean *Mary*," said Monthermer, enlightened by this allusion.

"Do I?—I asked *you* her name," said the lady, almost startled by a familiarity of speech

implying even greater intimacy than she had apprehended.

"Her name is Miss De Ligne; her father one of my Helmsley Abbey neighbours. It was an age since I had seen her before; and I scarcely recollected her."

Lady Adelaide, referring this confused assertion to their encounter at the drawing-room, could not but remark—"Your memory seems infirm, even for London and the season. I have met you riding with Miss De Ligne; I have seen you dancing with her; I have, in fact, scarcely found you apart from her and the duchess, since my arrival in town."

Lord Monthermer was gradually becoming the happiest of men.—Lady Adelaide admitted having taken note of his proceedings!—Lady Adelaide almost admitted her jealousy of his attentions to another!—

"I am more flattered than I can express that you should have deigned to observe me," whispered the *mal-adroit*, recalling the lady to self-possession, by pointing out the inferences to which she was giving rise. Luckily however for Monthermer, severity was not just then the cue of Lady Adelaide de Vere.

"I had begun to fear by your manner," he resumed, "that you had altogether withdrawn the indulgence shown me at Naples. Tell me, I entreat, why so cold since your return to England?—Why have you repelled my advances?—Why given me cause to apprehend that I had offended you?"—

"I fancied rather that I had given offence to *you!*" was her subdued reply; while Slowgo, finding his companions whispering together, was wise enough to rise and depart. "I was fearful you might resent the necessity

under which I found myself, of undeceiving the unfortunate misapprehensions of Mrs. Wroughton;—a person whom you cannot regard with higher esteem, I might almost say affection, than myself."

"What right had I to resent!" exclaimed the enraptured Monthermer. "Why should I desire poor Gerald to prolong his illusions—or even to be accepted through pity, when tenderness pleaded nothing in his favour?—Believe me, I applauded your candour.—Believe me, I appreciated your regard to the best interests of all parties; and rejoiced heart and soul, when I found his hopeless expectations set at rest for ever!"

"I had indeed little reason to hope you would welcome me into your family,"—said Lady Adelaide, affecting to misapprehend his observation. "I am fully aware of my own unwor-

thiness to become the wife of so fine-hearted a creature as Gerald Wroughton!"—

"You *cannot* suppose me guilty of such an implication!" cried Monthermer, with enthusiasm. "You *cannot* but be aware of the reverence, the passionate admiration with which I have ever regarded you!—You *cannot* but have been conscious of the wretchedness you were inflicting by the alteration of your demeanour!"

"I heard of you as so much caressed and courted,"—faltered her ladyship, in much emotion,—"that I feared you might misapprehend the motives of a friendship almost too frankly offered at Naples, to Sir William Helmsley. I trembled lest you should misinterpret — — I—"

"My dearest Adly!"—cried Lady Sudford, at that unlucky moment flying up to her

sister-in-law, as if buoyed by the streamers of her redundant ringlets — "pray take pity upon me and come home!—Our carriage has been up twice."

Lady Adelaide (the kindest and most philanthropic of human creatures, as Lord Slowgo invariably called her) rose to comply. As she moved along the still crowded rooms upon Lord Monthermer's arm, every eye was turned towards the beautiful creature who had chosen to remain in eclipse throughout the evening, and whose brows, adorned only with their natural beauties, afforded so striking a contrast to those around her. To press the completion of her half-uttered phrase was impossible. Nay, even in the cloak-room, Lord Monthermer, watched on one side by the tribe of Mitchell and on the other transfixed by the leaden stare of the Duchess of Kimbolton, found no oppor-

tunity to utter more to Lady Adelaide than "I shall have the honour of calling to-morrow in Arlington Street."

END OF VOL. II.

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